No. 6760

HAMPTON SERIES

NEGRO FOLK-SONGS

RECORDED BY

NATALIE CURTIS-BURLIN

IN FOUR BOOKS

BOOK IV

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G. SCHIRMER, INC., NEW YORK

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NATALIE CURTIS-BURLIN

Books I-II
Spirituals

Books III-IV
Work- and Play-Songs

Price, each, net, 50 cents
(In U. S. A.)

G. SCHIRMER, INC., NEW YORK

All royalties from the sale of these books go to Hampton Institute, Virginia, for the benefit of Negro education.

Printed in the U. S. A.

FOREWORD

IN the South, a white musician stumbles upon experiences that may be counted as among the most awakening of his life, for there the spirit of the Negro is often loosed in music that makes one wonder at the possibilities of the race. Far down in Alabama where the "Black Belt" is broad and the Negroes outnumber the whites, I touched upon something that class-rooms and concert-halls rarely hold,—nothing less than the primitive essence of untaught and unteachable creative art.

It was at the Calhoun Industrial School[1] (whose existence was inspired by the example of Hampton Institute) that a great meeting of colored people was held one year to listen to discussions by Northern white scholars concerning the advancement of their race. Over tawny roads that stretched beneath tall pine trees came the people of the "Black Belt" in wagons and astride of plodding mules; brown mules, black mules, lemon-colored mules—they came with their dusky riders from all directions in an endless stream, and I particularly remember the flash of a red petticoat across a white mule glinting through the green. Such shining good-natured faces,—pure Negroes these with little admixture of white blood, representing different types of the many tribes brought from all parts of Africa by the slave-trade, through which captives from the far interior and from the opposite coasts of the Dark Continent were finally landed in America. Some of the men were tall, and their aquiline noses and pointed beards told of the strain of Arab and other Semitic blood that runs through many a native of Africa's East Coast; others were swart and thick-set, with flat noses and heavy lips. Many were so ebony black that the shadows in their smooth skins seemed a soft gray-purple, like deep ripe grapes. No European peasantry could have offered to the painter more striking material than these dark-skinned sinewy people in their blue jeans and bright calicoes amid the deep tones of the pines.

They hitched their animals in the woods and gathered in a cleared space under the trees. These colored folk had come many miles over mountain and valley from their crude log-cabins, and they assembled long before the hour. To them this gathering had almost the significance of a religious service, a "Camp-meet'n" of the olden time. Seated in rows, reverent and silent, they waited for something to happen. And as they sat, patient in the early warmth of the April sun, suddenly a rhythmic tremor seemed to sway over the group as a sweep of wind stirs grasses; there arose a vibration, an almost inaudible hum—was it from the pine trees or from this mass of humanity?—and then the sound seemed to mold itself into form, rhythmic and melodic, taking shape in the air, and out from this floating embryo of music came the refrain of a song quavered by one voice, instantly caught up by another—till soon the entire gathering was rocking in time to one of the old plantation melodies! Men, women and children sang, and the whole group swung to and

[1] A remarkable collection of Negro Spirituals has been made for the Calhoun School by Miss Emily Halowell: *"Calhoun Plantation Songs."*

fro and from side to side with the rhythm of the song, while many of the older people snapped their fingers in emphasis like the sharp click of an African gourd rattle.

It was spirited singing and it was devout; but the inspirational quality of the group-feeling made this music seem a lambent, living thing, a bit of "divine fire" that descended upon these black people like the gift of tongues. It was as though the song had first hovered in the trees above their swaying forms, intangible, till one of them had reached up and seized it, and then it had spread like flame. And as usual with Negroes, this was extemporaneous part-singing,—women making up alto, men improvising tenor or bass, the music as a whole possessed so completely by them all (or so utterly possessing them!) that they were free to abandon themselves to the inspiration of their own creative instinct.

Often in the South I heard this same strange breathless effect of a song being born among a group simultaneously, descending, as it were, from the air. On a suffocatingly hot July Sunday in Virginia, in a little ramshackle meeting-house that we had approached over a blinding road nearly a foot deep in dust, a number of rural Negroes had gathered from an outlying farm, dressed all in their dust-stained Sunday best for the never-to-be-omitted Sabbath service. Their intense and genuine piety with its almost barbaric wealth of emotion could not but touch a visitor from the cold North. The poverty of the little church was in itself a mute appeal for sympathy. A gaudy and somewhat ragged red table cloth covered the crude pulpit on which rested a huge and very battered Bible,—it had probably sustained many vigorous thumps during the high-flown exhortations of the gilt-spectacled preacher. A crazy lamp, tilted side-ways, hung from the middle of the ceiling. Through the broken window-shutters (powerless to keep out the diamond glare of the morning sun) came slits of light that slanted in syncopated angles over the swarthy people, motes dancing in the beams. No breeze; the sticky heat was motionless; from afar came a faint sound of chickens clucking in the dust. Service had already begun before we came and the congregation, silent and devout, sat in rows on rough backless benches. The preacher now exhorted his flock to prayer and the people with one movement surged forward from the benches and down onto their knees, every black head deep-bowed in an abandonment of devotion. Then the preacher began in a quavering voice a long supplication. Here and there came an uncontrolable cough from some kneeling penitent or the sudden squall of a restless child; and now and again an ejaculation, warm with entreaty, "O Lord!" or a muttered "Amen, Amen"—all against the background of the praying, endless praying.

Minutes passed, long minutes of strange intensity. The mutterings, the ejaculations, grew louder, more dramatic, till suddenly I felt the creative thrill dart through the people like an electric vibration, that same half-audible hum arose,—emotion was gathering atmospherically as clouds gather—and then, up from the depths of some "sinner's" remorse and imploring came a pitiful little plea, a real Negro "moan," sobbed in musical cadence. From somewhere in that bowed gathering another voice improvised a response: the plea sounded again, louder this time and more impassioned; then other voices joined in the answer, shaping it into a musical phrase; and so, before our ears, as one might

say, from this molten metal of music a new song was smithied out, composed then and there by no one in particular and by everyone in general.

With the Negro, it would seem that the further back one traces the current of musical inspiration that runs through the race, (that is, the more primitive the people and thus the more instinctive the gift), the nearer does one come to the divine source of song,—intuition, which is in turn the well-spring of all genius. So often does education deaden and even utterly destroy intuitive art in individuals as in races, that one might affirm that the genius is he who can survive the attrition of scholastic training! Certainly no sophisticated part-singing sounds in my memory with the poignant charm of the unconscious music which I heard one day in a big tobacco factory in the South where a group of utterly illiterate and ignorant black laborers were sorting tobacco leaves in a dusty, barren room. Rough sons and daughters of toil, ragged and unkempt, no one could accuse them of ever having come under the smooth influence of "refined white environment." Crude and primitive they were in looks as in speech. Yet I never heard collective voices that were sweeter or that appealed more immeasurably to the imagination with their penetrating, reedlike beauty of quality. The fields, the hot sun, the open sky sang through them. And the harmonies with which these workers adorned their half barbaric melodies seemed prismatic in their brilliant unmodulated grouping of diatonic chords, their sudden interlocking of unrelated majors and minors, and their unconscious defiance of all man-made laws of "voice progressions." Such rich, colorful music, (and in my memory I cannot separate the sound of it from the picture of the tobacco leaves in the brown hands), it seemed as though these singers painted with their voices that barren room. And I thought "Yes,—that is the Negro. So he has done always. With song he has colored his shadowed life, evoking hope, joy, beauty even, from within himself."

Yet in the voices of these toilers lingered an indescribable pathos, a something both child-like and touching. For with all his brawn, his good-humor, and his wide, ready smile, the Negro, when he sings, tells something of that shadow that only song can lighten. Probably no blacks in the country were more backward than these factory-hands, laboring so monotonously in the lazy haze of Southern heat,—a heat that puts one's brain to sleep. That they could sing extemporaneously in harmonies that not only approached real art but that touched one's very soul, seemed a proof that though this is still a child-race, the long path of human evolution and advance stretches before it in endless promise. Is it not in the Song of the Negro that we glimpse the spirit of the race reaching forward toward development and eventual unfolding? And when we see that song illumining with an inner light multitudes otherwise darkly inarticulate and groping, we think of Emerson and ponder: The Negro 'Over-Soul'—is it Music?

NATALIE CURTIS-BURLIN.

Note:—This collection of Negro Folk-Songs consists of four books, each containing songs for male quartet. As the books appear separately in serial publication, the descriptive notes accompanying each song are arranged in such a way as to make each volume independent of the others. Any slight repetition of facts with regard to Negro singing will therefore be understood.

CONTENTS

THE untaught instinct of the Negro to turn life into music is given full freedom to expand and develop at Hampton Institute, Virginia, the school for Negroes and Indians on which have been patterned Tuskegee Institute and the Calhoun School in Alabama; the Penn School at St. Helena Island, South Carolina; and other industrial training schools for backward races all over the world, as well as the great system of Government Schools for Indians in the United States.[1]

Among those devoted co-workers whom General Armstrong,[2] founder of Hampton, drew about him in the early days of the school—those days of struggle when the Hampton idea of the correlation of "hand, head and heart" in education was a new and radical experiment—among those who gave their whole lives for the furtherance of Armstrong's purpose and to the fulfillment of his prophecy was Cora M. Folsom,[3] whom the Indian students called "Mother" and whom the Negroes knew as a friend of unfailing sympathy and understanding. It was she who kept alive at Hampton the old Work- and Play-Songs recorded in this volume and in Book III of this series, and it was with her help that I was able to gather up these songs and set them upon paper for the coming generations.

The "Peanut-Pickin' Song" and the "Hammerin' Song" were sung for me by Ira Goodwin, Joseph Barnes, William Cooper and Timothy Carper, all Hampton students; but in the singing of the "Lullaby" and "'Liza-Jane" the quartet was augmented by James E. Scott, Page Lancaster, Benjamin Davis and other young men who "dropped in" during recreation hours at the school to add their voices and their sunny laughter to this work of record. Most of these "boys" who sang so gaily and light-heartedly and danced as they sang, answered their country's call and went singing into the service of the United States Army. Some are now safely returned from Europe, some have been wounded and some will never sing again. But those who went "West" have, like their fellows, left the echo of their voices in France. The old songs that upheld the soul of the Negro race during the long years of bondage in America, were carried into the greatest concerted human struggle that mankind has ever known. Said a French General, "It was not alone the colored troops that were helped by the songs of the Negroes, but the white people as well. Far and near, the black soldiers cheered with their singing all who came within sound of their voices; officer and private, villager and peasant alike—none will ever forget the stirring effect of those old Negro songs." In the history of the war, memory will sound a pleasanter note for the singing of the Negro over-seas.

[1]See Foreword, Book I, this series.
[2]See page 7, Book I, this series.
[3]See page 8, Book III, this series.

THESE RECORDS OF

NEGRO WORK- AND PLAY-SONGS

ARE DEDICATED TO

HENRY T. BURLEIGH

NEGRO music in America has had as one of its prophets and standard-bearers a colored artist of great dignity, simplicity and worth: Henry T. Burleigh, singer and composer.

It was very early in life that the racial love of music found insistent expression in "Harry Burleigh," as he is affectionately called by whites and blacks. For as a child he paid with pneumonia for the joy of hearing a great pianist play. Kneedeep in snow but oblivious to the cold he had stood for hours outside the window of a house in Erie where Rafael Joseffy was giving a recital. His illness and the cause of it attracted the interest of the lady (Mrs. E. C. Russell) in whose house Joseffy had played, and she subsequently arranged that "Harry" should open the door for guests whenever she had music at her home, so that in this way he could listen without danger. So Burleigh was privileged to hear many of the great artists of the day, and this contact led to his receiving a scholarship at the National Conservatory of Music in New York, where he advanced so rapidly that he soon became assistant instructor in several branches of study. It was here that the friendship between the young colored man and Anton Dvořák was formed, for the Bohemian composer had accepted at that time the post of musical director of the Conservatory. And it was Burleigh's singing of the old Negro melodies which in a great measure gave to Dvořák that contact with Negro folk-music which formed the background for the themes of his own creating in the "Symphony from the New World."

Nor did Burleigh's association with the best in art ever lead him away from the music of his race. On the contrary, it is he, the foremost singer whom the race so far has produced, who has steadily upheld the value and beauty of true Negro music. On his concert programs, along with the songs of great composers, he has always placed a group of the old Negro Spirituals, thus telling the world that this racial music of his people is worthy to be heard beside the great songs of Art. Nor has he ever shared that instinctive turning away from the old melodies that has characterized many modern colored people. For to him the Spirituals were not to be looked down on and wilfully ignored as reminders of a condition of servitude, but rather to be revered as living proof of a race's spiritual ascendency over oppression and humiliation.

Never has Henry Burleigh sunk the high standard of his art or commercialized the sacred heritage of his people's song. Quietly, unassumingly, but with singular strength of purpose and conviction he has fought for and won a foremost place among the great artists of America, taking with him the

Negro folk-song. As singer he is known on the concert platforms of our finest musical organizations, and as composer of songs and choruses his name is found on programs throughout the country. For over a quarter of a century he has been solo baritone of the white choir at St. George's Church, New York, and for many years he has also sung in the choir of the Jewish Temple Emanu-El.

The Negro race in America looks to Henry Burleigh with no greater respect than does the white race which acclaims him as one of the modest builders of a truly American art. To him, and to all that he has stood for, the recording of these songs is dedicated. Nor may we omit full recognition of those other professional Negro musicians who are now also striving worthily to emphasize the Negro's contribution to the art of this land: R. Nathaniel Dett, J. Rosamond Johnson, Will Marion Cook, Carl Diton, Mrs. E. Azalia Hackley, the Work brothers of Fiske University, and other colored composers and performers in different parts of the country. For the fact that better days are now dawning for Negro artists in America is due in no small degree to the example of Burleigh, and to the perserverance and devotion of all these pioneers who through sacrifice and struggle are trying to lift the standard of the Negro musician and to help dissolve the "color-line" through Art.

PEANUT-PICKIN' SONG

THIS song dates from the days of slavery, when it was sung on the peanut-plantations of a Virginian "Massa." Its quaint verses offer a glimpse of the Southland of the olden days. It is autumn, and in the open air a bonfire sends its welcome glow to the warmth-loving Negroes clustered around it, sitting on the ground, busily picking the harvested peanuts from their stems. Old women with bandanna turbans, old men in wide, battered hats, boys and girls, slaves of all ages are singing the peanut-picking song as the "peas" slip through their brown fingers into the waiting baskets. The gathering has something of that social coming-together in labor noted by Booker T. Washington in his description of the corn-shucking "bees" of slave-times.[1] To make work social, joyous, songful, is the natural instinct of primitive people: this it is that gives life to labor which in modern times too often yields death to the soul of the worker. The Negro on the great plantations knew how to enrich the lot of the slave: with song he kept his spirit from "sinkin' down."[2]

In this old chant the "Big House," the white-columned colonial mansion of the slaveholder, seems to stretch forth a kindly and affectionate hand to the simple black man, rewarding him for his long toil by a personal gift. "Chris'-mus shoes" and the "ol' coat" are evidently instances of "Massa's" approval of the full basket and sack, for all the peanuts seem indeed to have been "picked off" by the faithful laborers whose singing voices made part of the industrial life of the South.

The "walkin'-cane" with which the slave expects to "strut down de Big House lane" is perhaps as bold an imaginative flight as golden slippers in Heaven—for the cane was peculiarly the property of the white "*gentleman*," and only the freed Negro was allowed to carry it. Hence, perhaps, the great popularity of the slender little walking-stick among the colored race.

This "Peanut-Pickin' Song" was brought to Hampton by a Negro boy named Weldon George, who came from Suffolk County, Virginia, where quantities of peanuts are grown, and where the old song is still heard. The melody has a lightsome, lilting rhythm, almost like that of a dance, and its rural character is emphasized by the five-tone scale. The verses show the care-free, unselfconscious, half-humorous spontaneity of the true folk-poem. Particularly delightful is the last verse, where "Dat ol' 'possum up de tree" is of course waiting to be caught and to end the labor among the peanut-vines with the best reward of all—"dumplin' pies!"

PEANUT-PICKIN' SONG

You kin do jes'-a[3] *what you please,*
I's gwine ter pick off-a Massa's peas,
I's gwine ter pick off-a Massa's peas,
An' den I's gwine home.

[1] See "Co'n-Shuckin' Song," Book III, this Series.
[2] Some of the old songs bear the refrain "Keep me from sinkin' down."
[3] Just.

I kin fill dis baskit if I choose,
Den I's gwine home—
Den Massa gwine give me Chris'mus shoes,
Den I's gwine home—
Two red han'k'chiefs an' a walkin'-cane,
Den I's gwine home—
Den I's gwine strut down de Big House lane,
Den I's gwine home.

Oh,
You kin do jes'-a what you please,
I's gwine ter pick off-a Massa's peas,
I's gwine ter pick off-a Massa's peas,
An' den I's gwine home.

Fill dis baskit an' dis ol' sack,
Den I's gwine home—
Den ol' Massa, when he gits back,
Den I's gwine home—
Gwine ter sen' me to de Big House fer ter git off dat rack,
Den I's gwine home—
His ol' coat fer ter put on[1] ma back,
Den I's gwine home.

Oh,
You kin do jes'-a what you please,
I's gwine ter pick off-a Massa's peas,
I's gwine ter pick off-a Massa's peas,
An' den I's gwine home.

Dat ol' possum is up de tree,
Den I's gwine home—
I bet he's waitin' dere fer me,
Den I's gwine home—
I's gwine ketch him 'less he flies,
Den I's gwine home—
Den talk 'bout dem dumplin' pies!
Den I's gwine home.

[1]Pronounced in Negro dialect with a long *o*, *ohn*.

Oh,
You kin do jes'-a what you please,
I's gwine ter pick off-a Massa's peas,
I's gwine ter pick off-a Massa's peas,
An' den I's gwine home.

G. S. 8vo Choruses
No. 6766

I
Peanut Pickin' Song

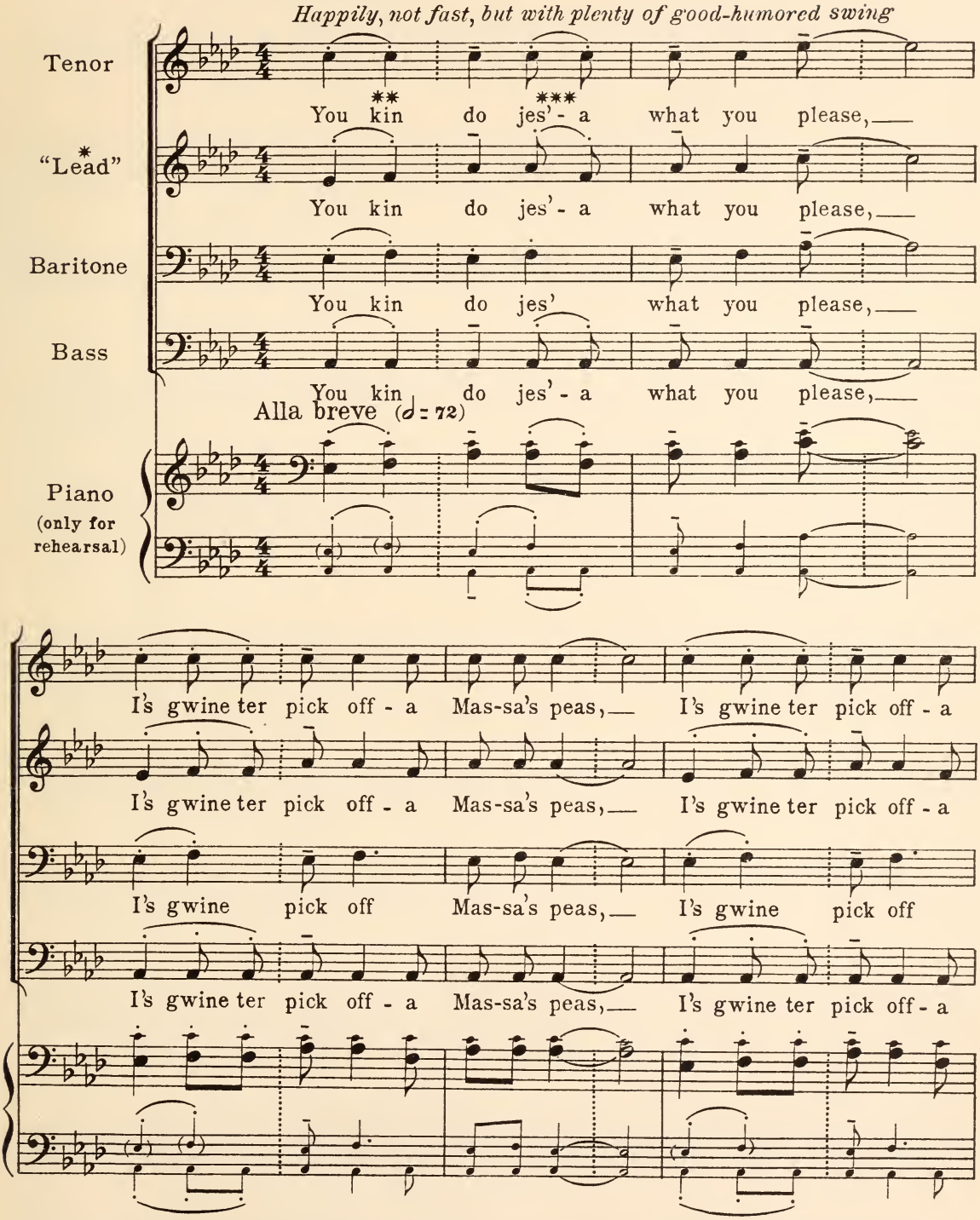
From Suffolk County, Virginia.

Price
50 cents, net

Chorus

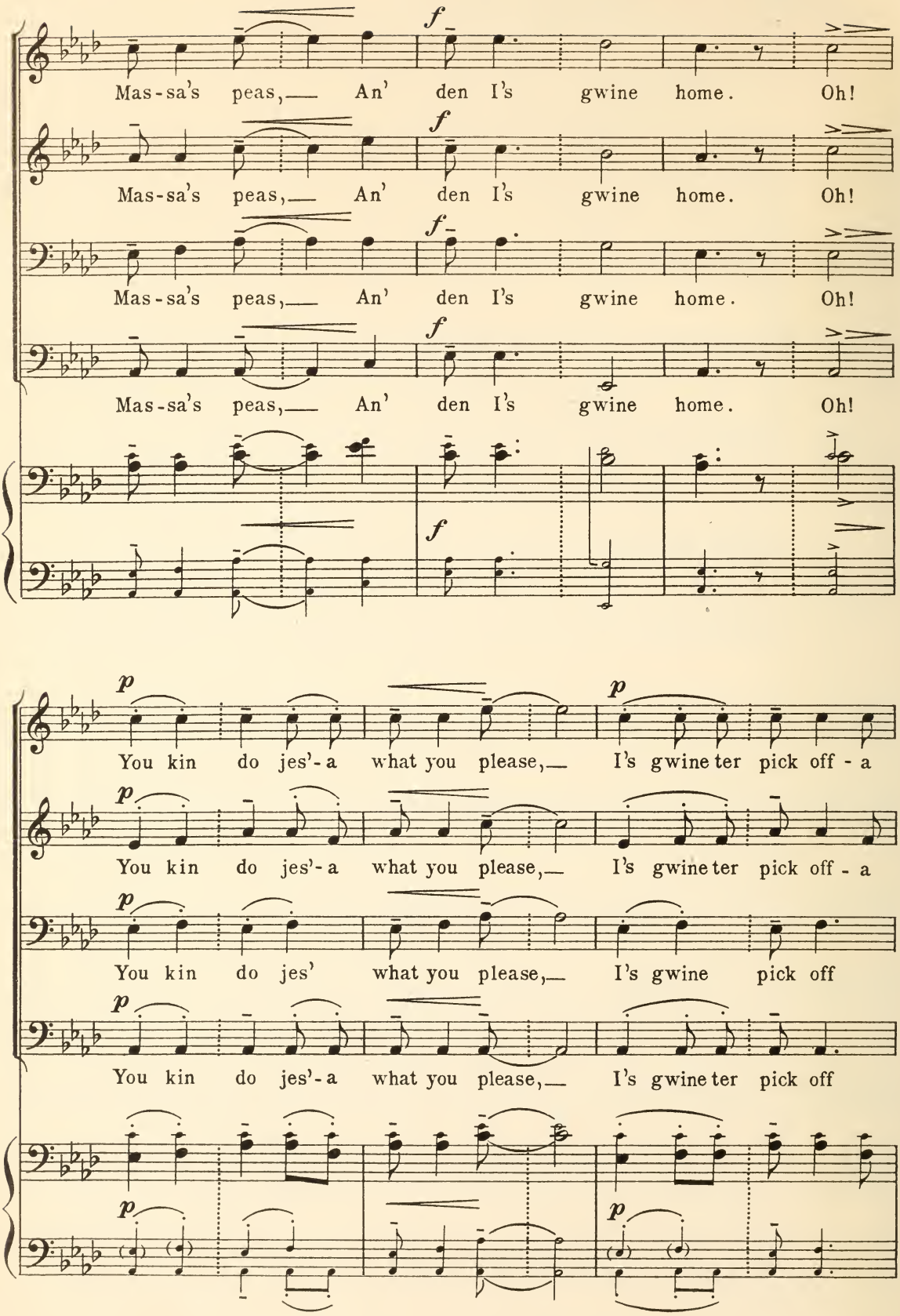
Alla breve

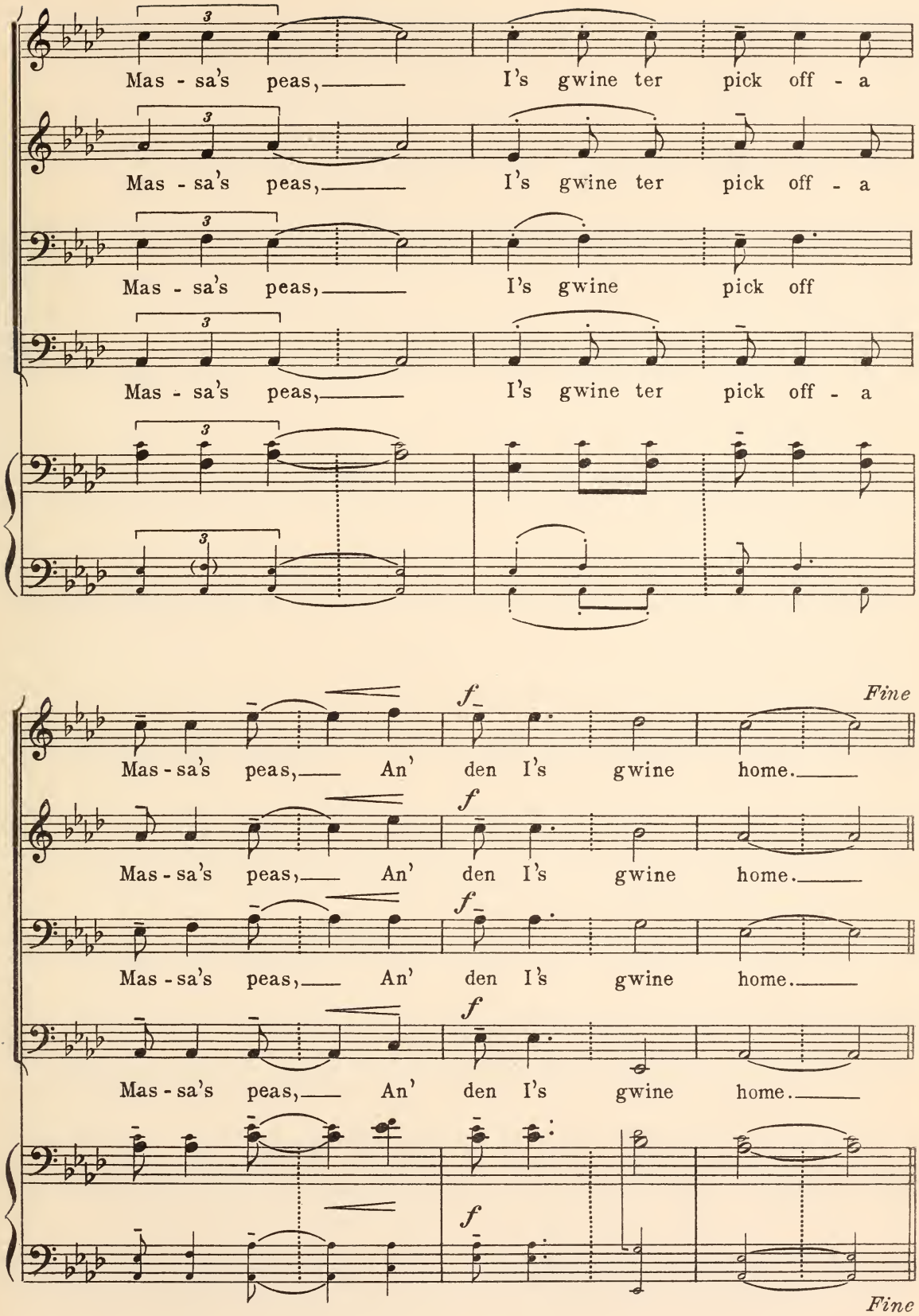
Happily, not fast, but with plenty of good-humored swing

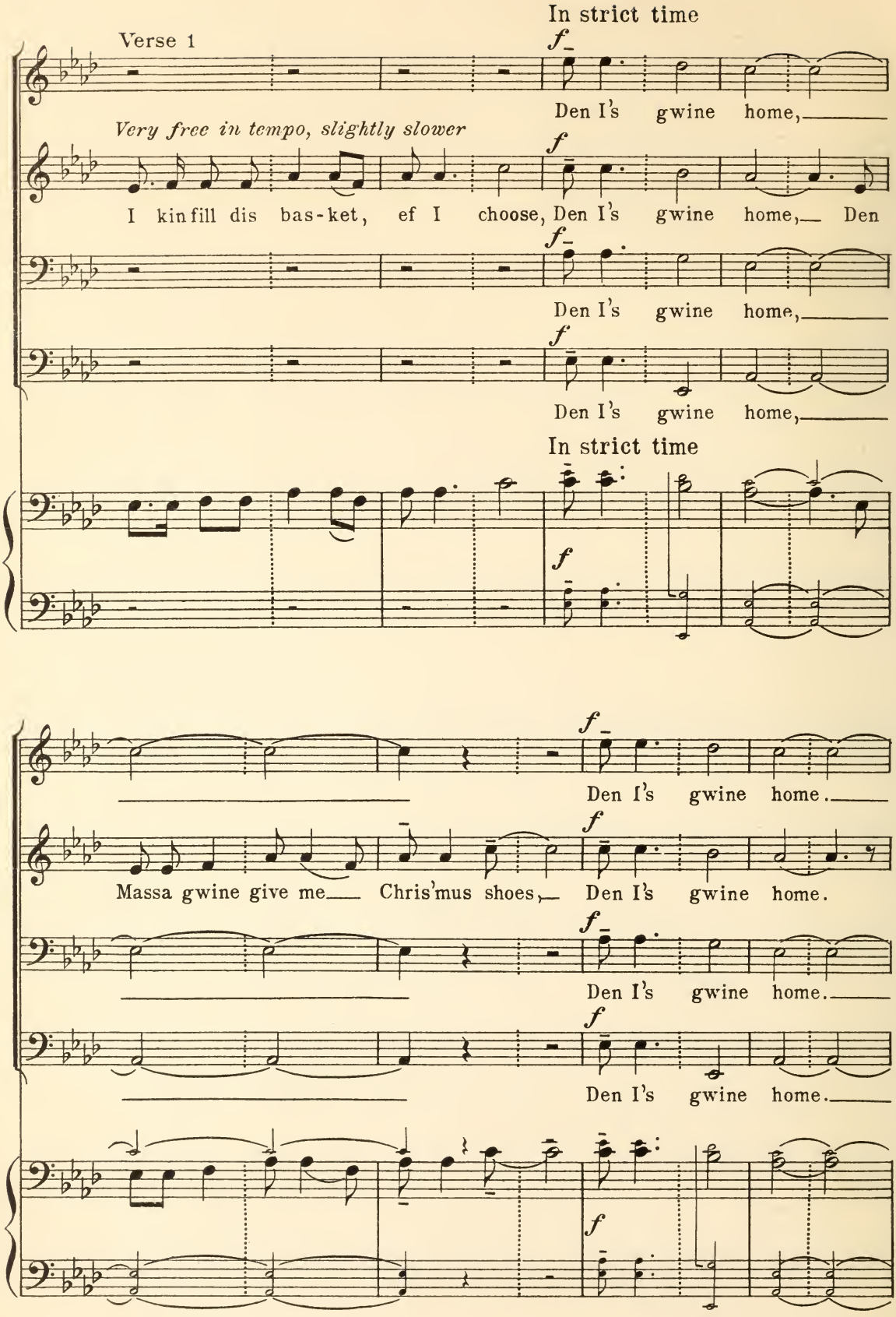


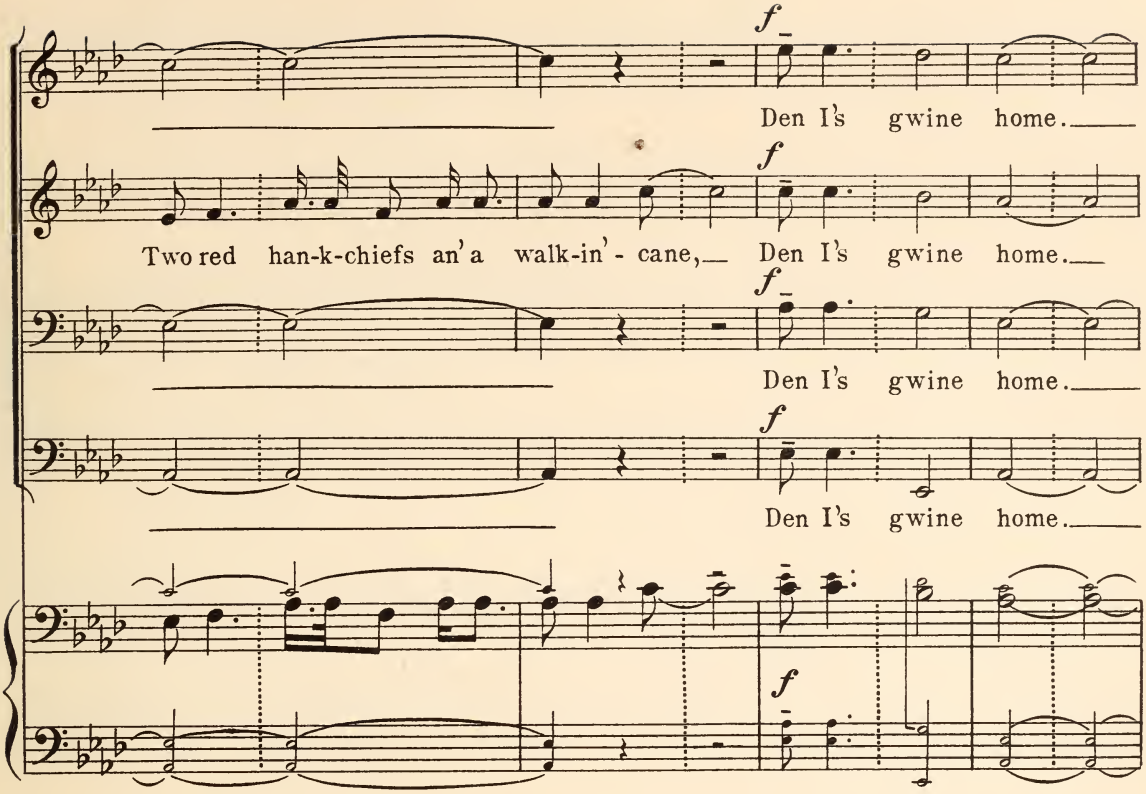
* The voice of the "Lead" (Leader) carries the melody and is printed in the piano-part in large type. It must sound above the other voices.

** can. *** just.

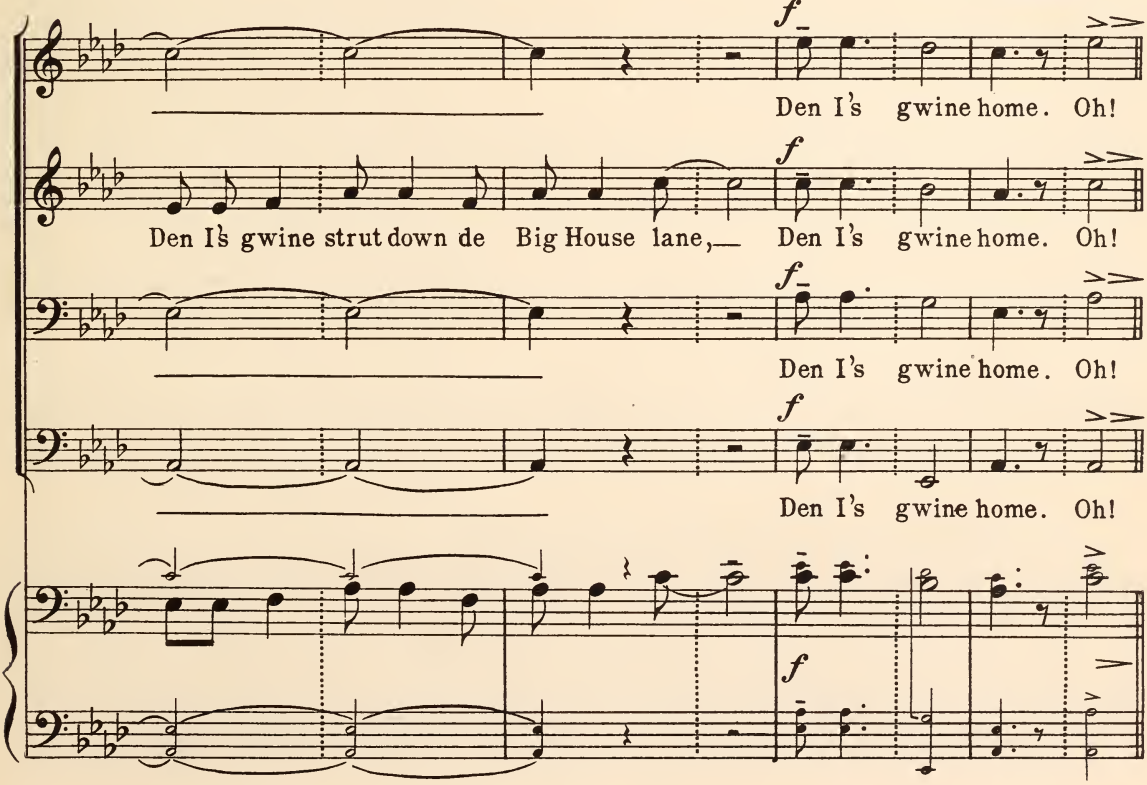

Mas-sa's peas,— An' den I's gwine home. Oh!
Mas-sa's peas,— An' den I's gwine home. Oh!
Mas-sa's peas,— An' den I's gwine home. Oh!
Mas-sa's peas,— An' den I's gwine home. Oh!
You kin do jes'-a what you please,— I's gwine ter pick off - a
You kin do jes'-a what you please,— I's gwine ter pick off - a
You kin do jes' what you please,— I's gwine pick off
You kin do jes'-a what you please,— I's gwine ter pick off

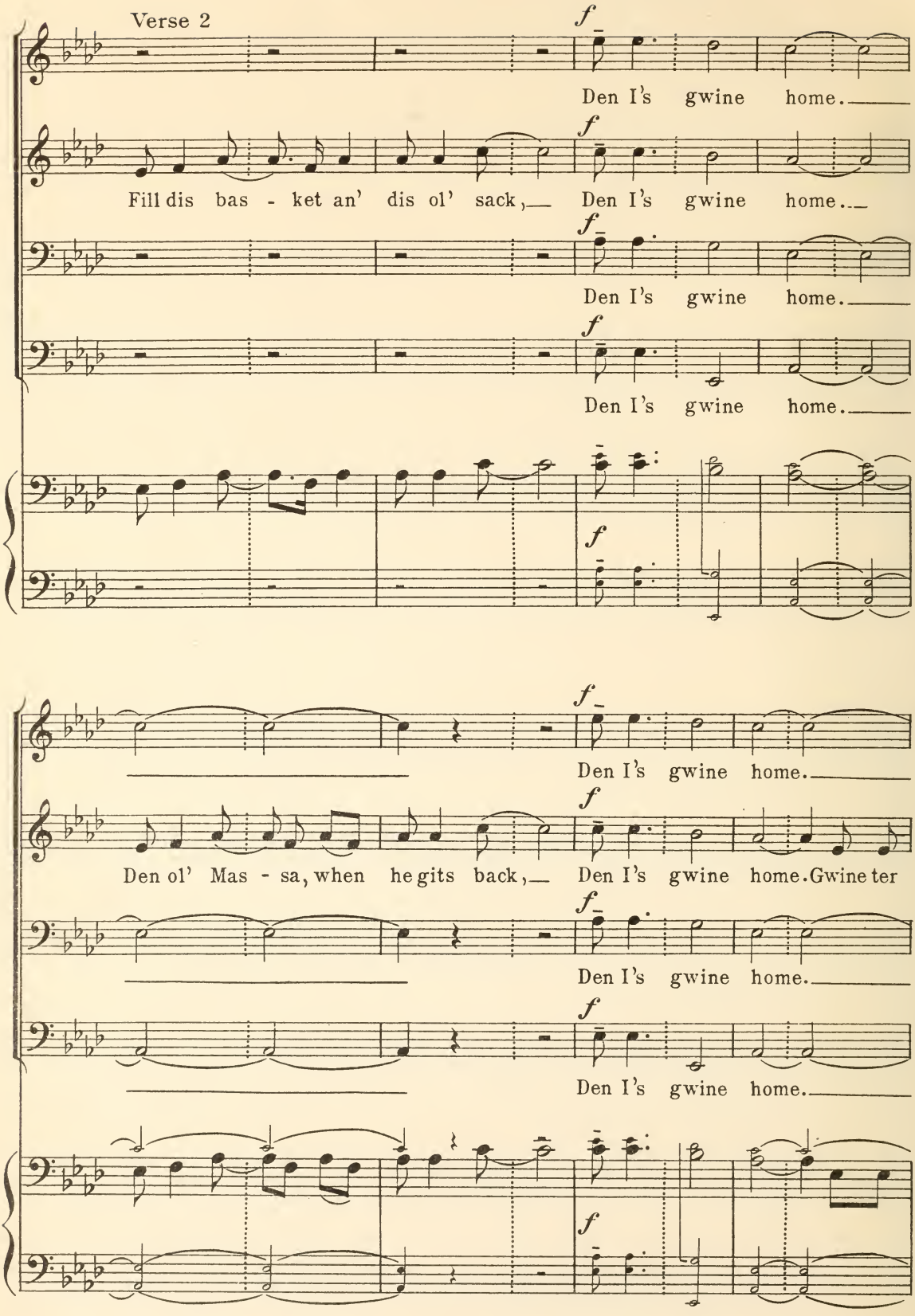

Mas - sa's peas, I's gwine ter pick off - a
Mas - sa's peas, I's gwine ter pick off - a
Mas - sa's peas, I's gwine pick off
Mas - sa's peas, I's gwine ter pick off - a
Mas-sa's peas, An' den I's gwine home.
Mas-sa's peas, An' den I's gwine home.
Mas-sa's peas, An' den I's gwine home.
Mas-sa's peas, An' den I's gwine home.
Fine
Fine

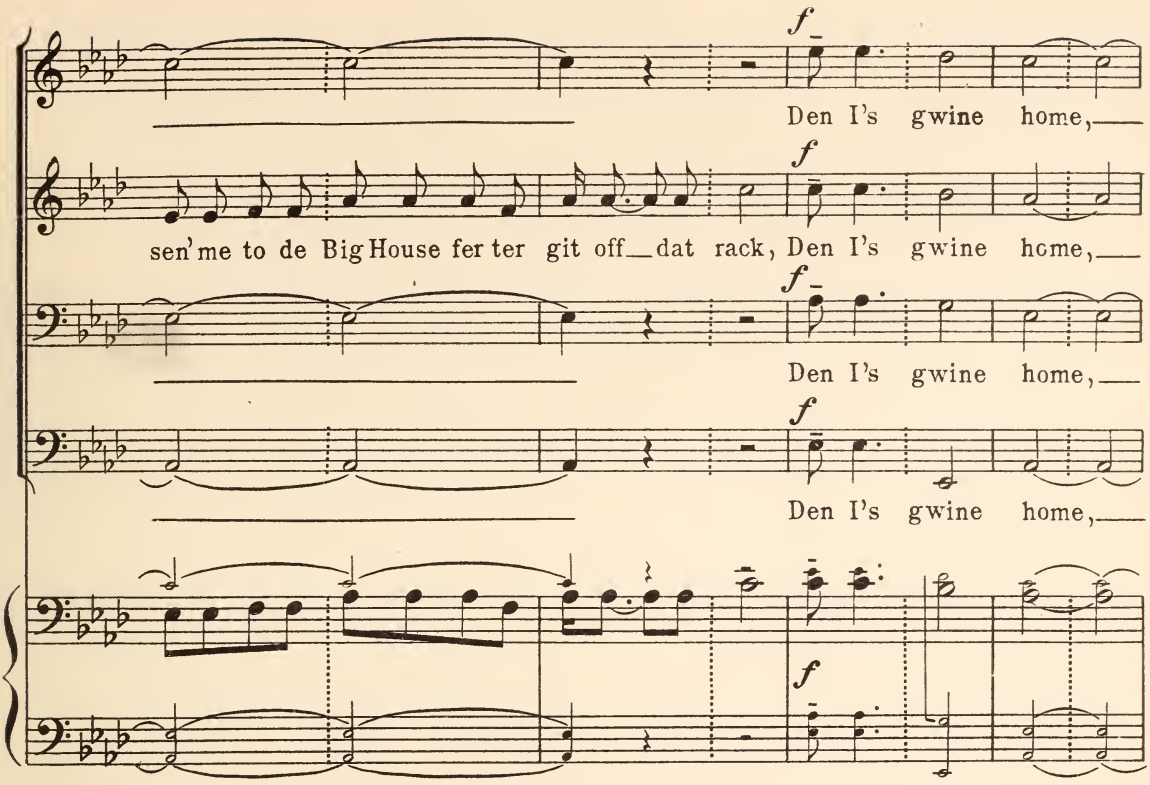

In strict time
Verse 1
f
Den I's gwine home,
Very free in tempo, slightly slower
f
I kinfill dis bas-ket, ef I choose, Den I's gwine home, Den
f
Den I's gwine home,
f
Den I's gwine home,
In strict time
f
f
Den I's gwine home.
f
Massa gwine give me Chris'mus shoes, Den I's gwine home.
f
Den I's gwine home.
f
Den I's gwine home.
f


Den I's gwine home.
Two red han-k-chiefs an' a walk-in' - cane, Den I's gwine home.
Den I's gwine home.
Den I's gwine home.

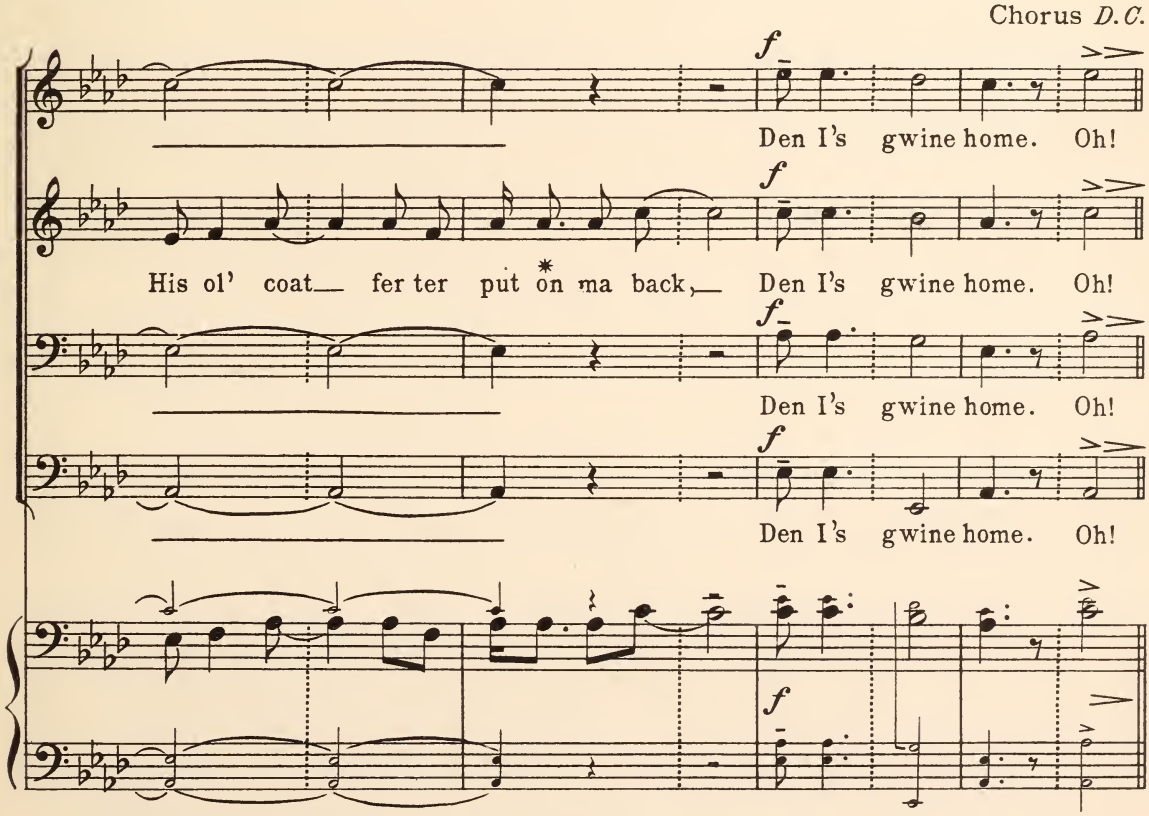
Chorus *D. C.*


Den I's gwine home. Oh!
Den I's gwine strut down de Big House lane, Den I's gwine home. Oh!
Den I's gwine home. Oh!
Den I's gwine home. Oh!

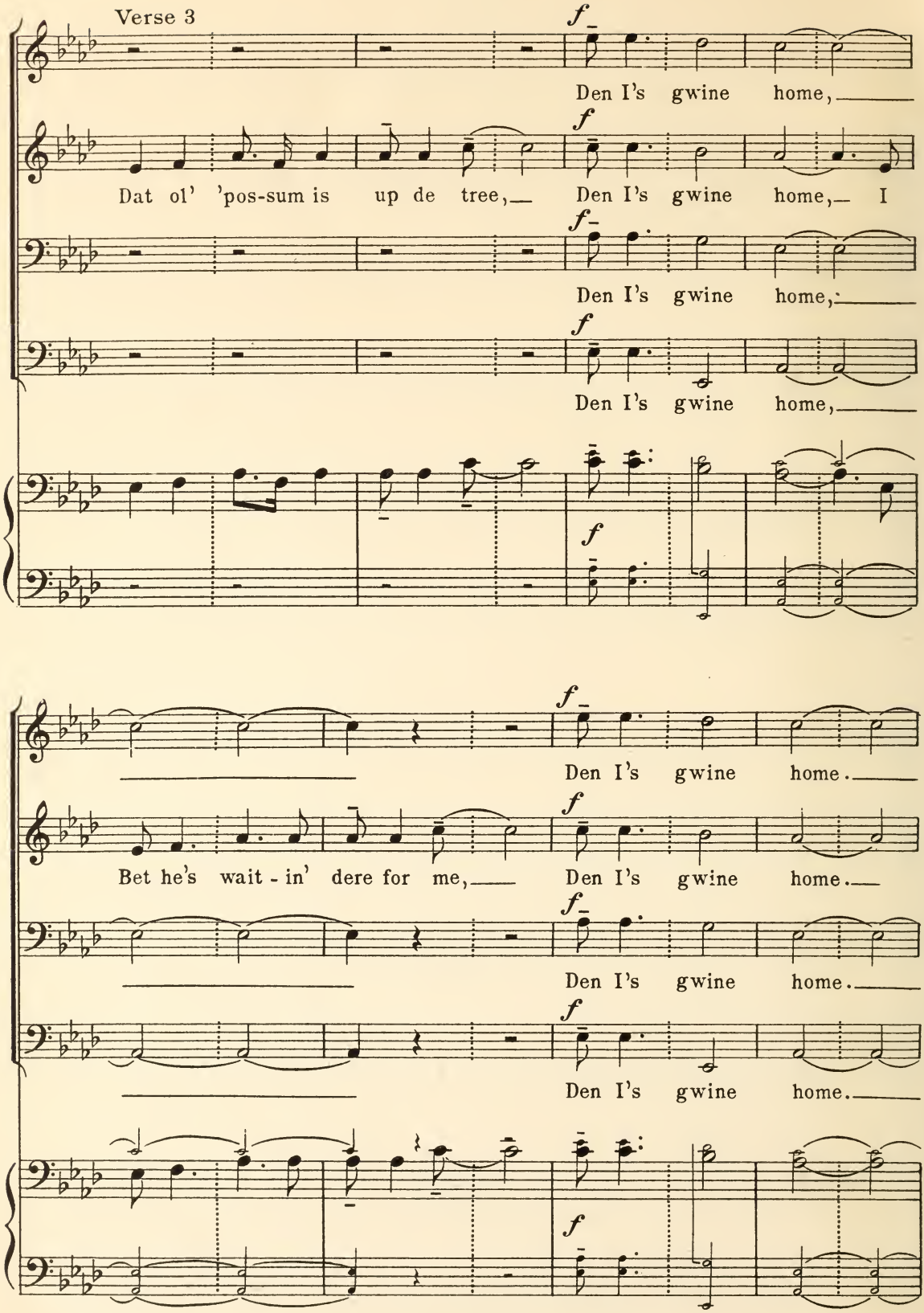

Verse 2
f
Den I's gwine home.
Fill dis bas - ket an' dis ol' sack, Den I's gwine home.
Den I's gwine home.
Den I's gwine home.
Den I's gwine home.
Den ol' Mas - sa, when he gits back, Den I's gwine home. Gwine ter
Den I's gwine home.
Den I's gwine home.

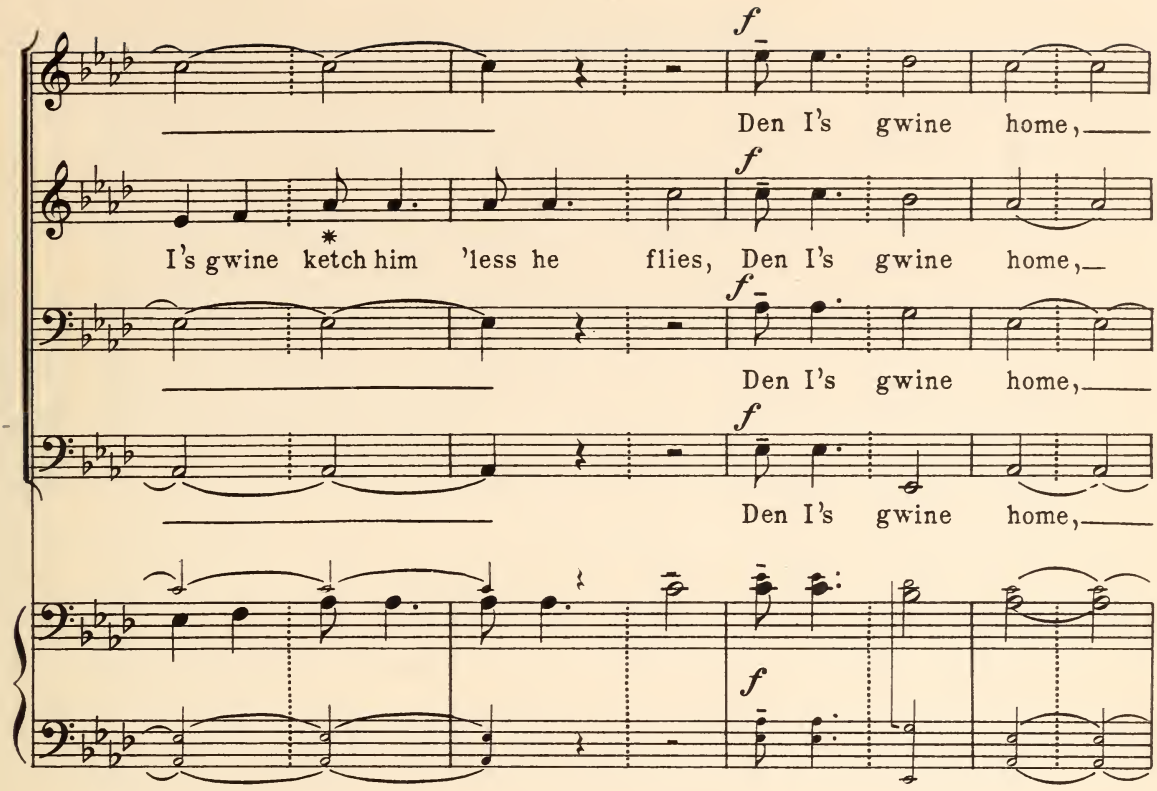


Chorus *D.C.*

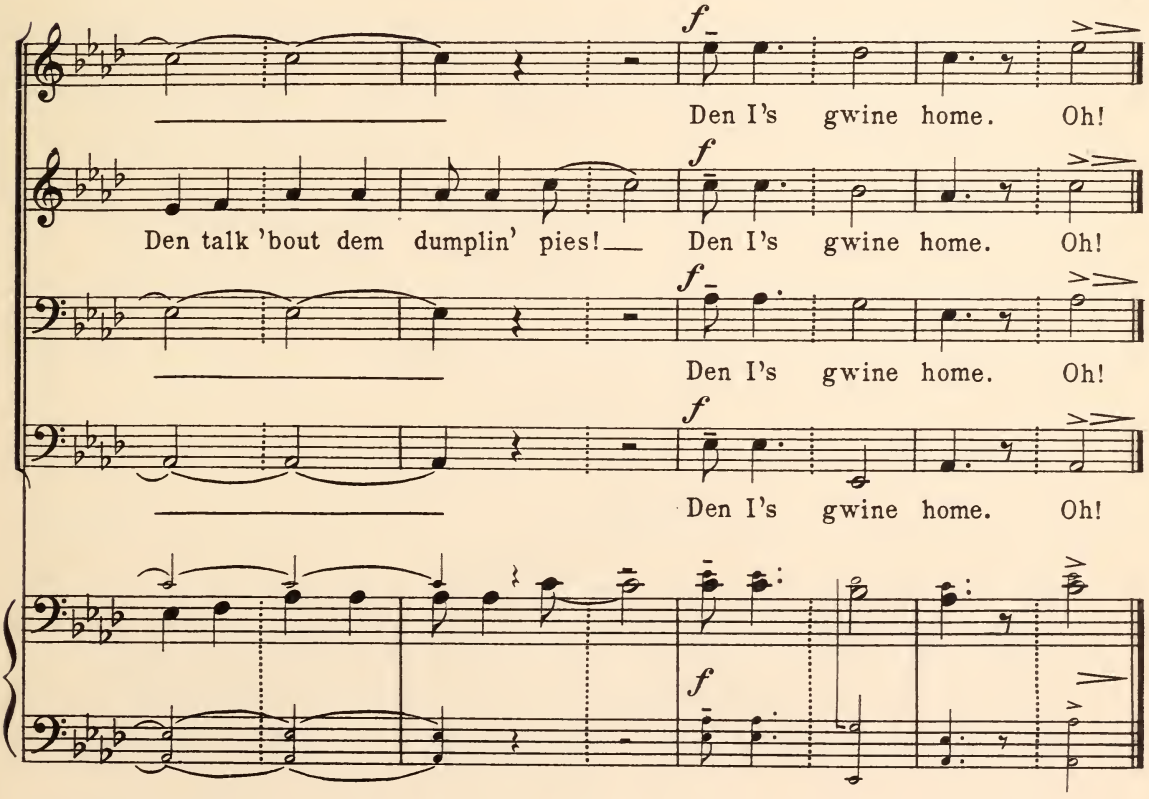


* "O" is pronounced long in Negro dialect: "ohn".


Verse 3
Den I's gwine home,
Dat ol' 'pos-sum is up de tree, Den I's gwine home, I
Den I's gwine home,
Den I's gwine home,
Den I's gwine home.
Bet he's wait - in' dere for me, Den I's gwine home.
Den I's gwine home.
Den I's gwine home.



Chorus *D.C.*



* catch

HAMMERIN' SONG

IN the mines of Virginia this "Hammerin' Song" chimed with the ringing of the hammer as the men chanted the simple pentatonic refrain which gave rhythm and pace to monotonous toil. The improvised verses were usually started by the "header" or headman, who received extra pay for his good voice, his quick musical fancy and his ability to keep the men singing and thus working in unison. "An' as soon we'd git started a-*singin*'," a Negro explained, "we'd forgit we was ti-yerd, an' so long as the header would keep de song a-goin', we'd keep ohn a-hammerin' an' *a-hammerin'!*"

Any number of verses may be sung to this chant, whose sole purpose is the rhythmizing of labor. Usually it is the header who sings alone, for the worker must keep his lungs full while swinging the heavy hammer. Yet sometimes the men break into harmony, joining in after the first notes, when they catch the words. The song is created and re-created by the instinctive play of musical imagination around the rhythm of the hammer's steady stroke. For the unerring artistic sense of these crude singers prompts them to make the very sound of the blow itself (accompanied by the sharp "*huh*" of their own breath) a part of the song, and it is just this extraordinary fusion of the rhythm of men's toiling bodies with the beat of music that makes the work-chants of the Negro typical racial expressions.

This song was brought to Hampton by a boy named George Alston, who had sung it in the mines. The life and death of the miner as well as his surroundings and even his thoughts are hammered out in this vivid and primitive chant. First we hear the summons of the header:

Boss is callin'
Let her drive, boys,
Foller me,
Foller me!

Next the boast,

Ain't no hammer
In dis mountain
Ring like mine,
Ring like mine!

And then the challenge,

Hammerin' man, you
Can't beat me,
I'll go down,
I'll go down.

And again:

Ef I beat you
To de bottom,
Don't git mad,
Don't git mad!

There must surely be an incentive to competition in the verse

Ef I leads yer,
O my partner,
Don't git mad,
Don't git mad!

And perhaps there is a note of good-natured irony (or is it good-natured pity and care for a weaker brother) in the words,

Hammerin' man, don't
Hammer so hard,
You'll break down,
You'll break down!

The dream of the miner as to the spending of his hard-won wage, "all in gold" and alas, so quickly gone; his impression of the events of the mine; and the thoughts of home, of "my poor mommer," and of "wife an' chillun," all are very human and are the more poignant in expression because so simply uttered. Nor may we forget the strain of the labor and the miner's constant realization of danger,

Dese ol' rocks in
Dis yere mountain
Hu'ts my side,
Hu'ts my side.
Ain't no use ter
Sen' fer de docter,
Water-boy's dade,
Water-boy's dade!

And again:

Ef you miss dis
Two-foot jumper,
You'll kill me dade,
You'll kill me dade!

How the boy who carried the water met his end in the mines is not explained. But it was indeed a "nine-poun' hammer" that killed "John Henry," who was evidently one of the best workmen, and whose death must have made a deep impression. Nevertheless, the singer boasts that the "nine-poun' hammer" can't kill *him;* he is "gwine home to his wife an' chillun," taking with him a "cake fer baby."

It is a crude, disjointed song, hewn out in the rough by the hammer itself; but it is a bit of reality—of beating, pulsing life, and it glints with a touch of poetry when the miner, up from the bowels of the earth, feels the breath of the heavens in his face, and asks, whether in fiction or in truth,

Did yo' ever
Stan' on mountain,
In er cloud,
In er cloud?
Did yo' ever
Wash yo' han's
In er cloud,
In er cloud?

What a picture the song invokes with its play of man's muscles and of man's daring against the rocks of the mountain, towering cloudward. Men, black men, climbing down and down into the heart of the mountain; ringing hammers making the rocks cry out in echoing pain; deep shadows, deep mysteries, sudden violent death; the spotting flare of little lights; the cross-sections of beams, the swinging bodies,—and then, through the clank and

pound of iron on stone, the sound of men's voices rising strong, rough, but tuneful, carving melody out of toil and blackness, mining and bringing to the light the rich ore of art which to the creative spirit lies hidden in even the dull facts and the routine of daily existence.

To have lost art out of the life of the worker is one of the most deadening blights of commercial civilization. Wherever still possible, humanity should hold fast to its God-given power of weaving some beauty of its own fashioning, some thread of personal interest through self-expression, into the woof of labor. For work, all work, is one of the great rhythms of life, and this the Negro exemplifies in his song. See how individual is the Negro's rhythmic invention in even such a simple chant as this one, built around a pounding hammer; and note how typical of the black man's sense of syncopation is the scanning of verses shown in the line-division and accentuation of the shouted phrases.

The folk-poems of these work-songs, mirroring as they do the daily life of black laborers, are gems in the literature of the United States, valuable both for their intrinsic interest—historically, poetically, socially—and for their worth as "human documents." They are alive; and the spirit of song that gave them birth should continue to live, not alone in the Negro's contribution to American letters, but in all the work of the race, from the humblest to the highest.

HAMMERIN' SONG

Boss is call-in'—huh!*
Let her drive, boys—huh!*
Foller me—huh!*
Foller me—huh!*

I been hammer-in'—huh!
In dis moun-tain—huh!
Four long year—huh!
Four long year—huh!

Ain't no ham-mer—huh!
In dis moun-tain—huh!
Ring like mine—huh!
Ring like mine—huh!

Capt'n tol'-me—huh!
Heard ma ham-mer—huh!
Forty-nine mile—huh!
Forty-nine mile—huh!

*Hammer falls here, while the men expel their breath with a sharp ejaculation.

Everybo-dy—huh!
What talks 'bout hammer-in'—huh!
Don't know how—huh!
Don't know how—huh!

Hammerin' man, you—huh!
Can't beat me—huh!
I'll go down—huh!
I'll go down—huh!

Ef I beat you—huh!
To de bot-tom—huh!
Don't git mad—huh!
Don't git mad—huh!

Ef I leads yer—huh!
O my part-ner—huh!
Don't git mad—huh!
Don't git mad—huh!

Hammerin' man, don't—huh!
Hammer so hard—huh!
You'll break down—huh!
You'll break down—huh!

Dis ol' ham-mer—huh!
Keep on ring-'in—huh!
Roun' ma hade[1]—huh!
Roun' ma hade—huh!

Dese ol' rocks in—huh!
Dis yere moun-tain—huh!
Hu'ts[2] my side—huh!
Hu'ts my side—huh!

Ain't no use ter—huh!
Sen' fer de doc-ter—huh!
Water-boy's dade[3]—huh!
Water-boy's dade—huh!

[1]Head.
[2]Hurts.
[3]Dead.

Did yo' ev-er—huh!
Stan' on moun-tain—huh!
In er cloud—huh!
In er cloud—huh!

Did yo' ev-er—huh!
Wash yo' han's—huh!
In er cloud—huh!
In er cloud—huh!

If you miss dis—huh!
Two-foot jump-er—huh!
You'll kill me dade—huh!
You'll kill me dade—huh!

I was hammer-in'—huh!
Las' Decem-ber—huh!
Wind blow cold—huh!
Wind blow cold—huh!

I had then 'bout—huh!
Forty-nine dol-lars—huh!
All in gold—huh!
All in gold—huh!

Thought I buy me—huh!
Horse an' bug-gy—huh!
An' ride er-roun'—huh!
An' ride er-roun'—huh!

If I had jes'—huh!
Forty-nine dol-lars—huh!
I'd be gone—huh!
I'd be gone—huh!

Capt'n, when you—huh!
Comin' o-ver—huh!
Nex' pay-day—huh!
Nex' pay-day—huh!

Mom' an' Pop-per—huh!
Keeps on writ-in'—huh!
Thinks I'm dade—huh!
Thinks I'm dade—huh!

Tryin' t' get liv-in'—huh!
My poor Mom-mer—huh!
'Tis so hard—huh!
'Tis so hard—huh!

Ef I could ham-mer—huh!
Like John Hen-ry—huh!
I'll be gone—huh!
I'll be gone—huh!

Take my ham-mer—huh!
Give to Cap-t'n—huh!
Say I'm gone—huh!
Say I'm gone—huh!

Nine-poun' ham-mer—huh!
Kill John Hen-ry—huh!
Can't kill me—huh!
Can't kill me—huh!

I's gwine see my—huh!
Wife an' chil-lun—huh!
I's gwine home—huh!
I's gwine home—huh!

Gwine ter git a—huh!
Cake fer ba-by—huh!
I's gwine home—huh!
I's gwine home—huh!

II

Hammerin' Song

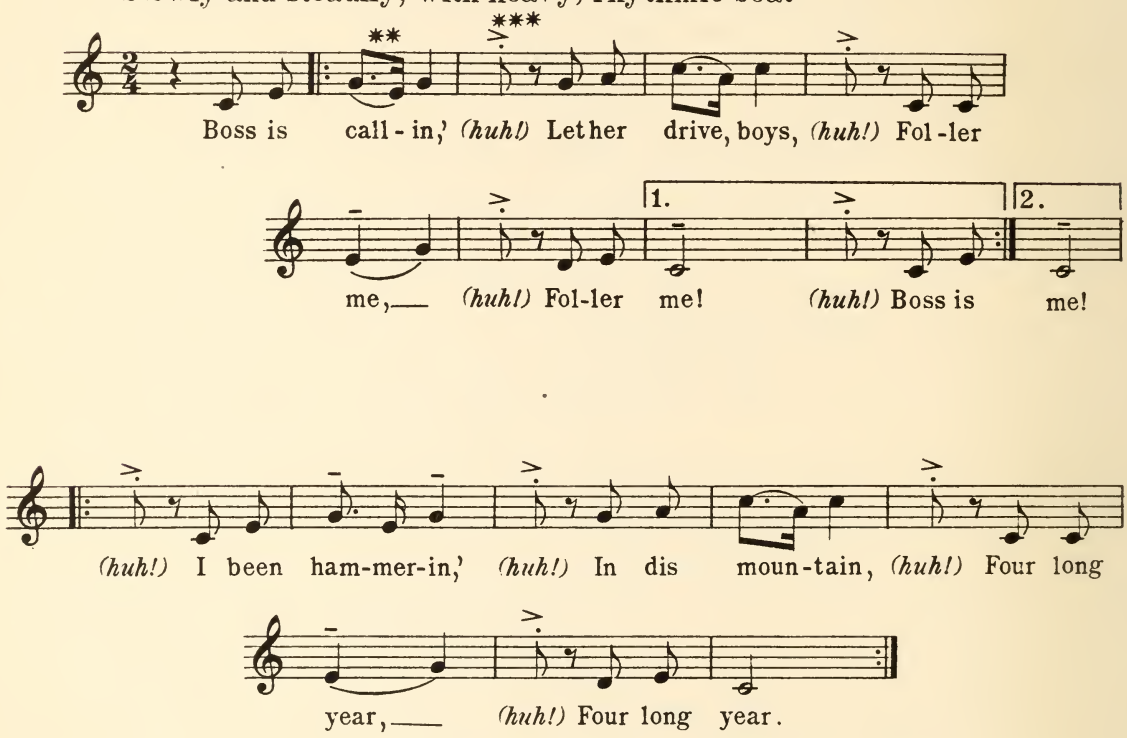
From the mines of Virginia

*

This song is sometimes sung with the "Header" chanting each verse first as a solo, and the gang of men repeating it afterwards in choral harmonies; see page 30.

As a rule, however, hard labor such as hammering takes all the breath of the men, so that the song is most often sung alone by the "Header."

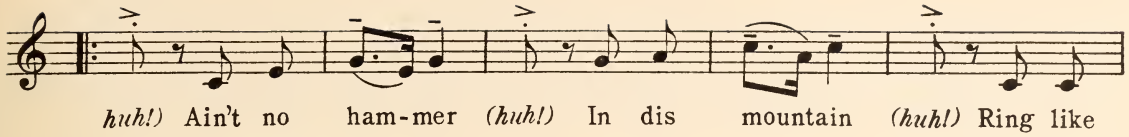
Slowly and steadily, with heavy, rhythmic beat

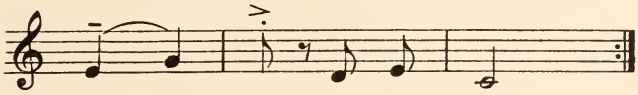


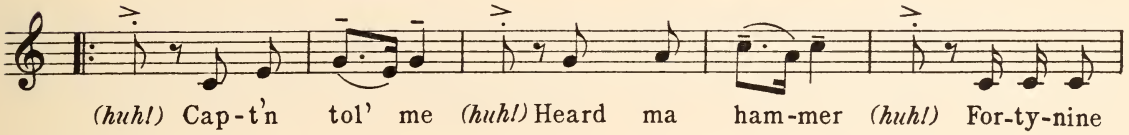
* The "Header" is the head-man in a gang of workers who leads the singing and often receives extra pay for his ability to keep the men working steadily by rhythmizing labor with song. See foreword to Book III, this series, and page 22, this book.

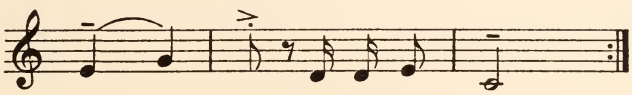
** The two beats of the measure are so heavily accented that the sixteenth-note has no value in itself and could be written as a grace-note.

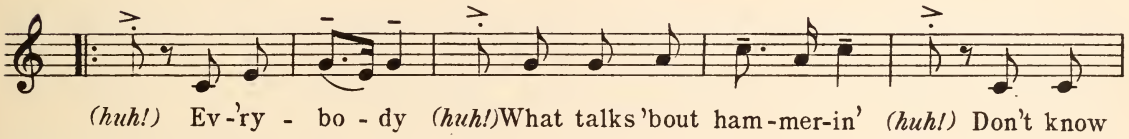
*** Hammer falls here. The note indicated is for time-value only; it has no pitch. The "*huh*" is a sharp sound caused by the sudden expelling of the breath as the men throw all their force into the blow.

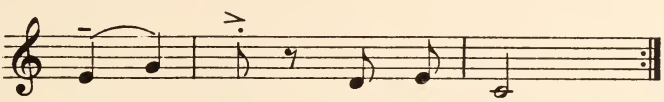

(huh!) Ain't no ham-mer (huh!) In dis mountain (huh!) Ring like

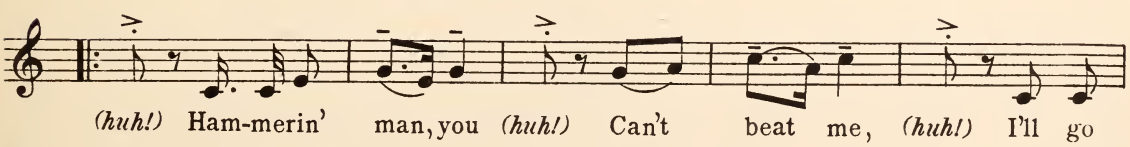

mine,— (huh!) Ring like mine.

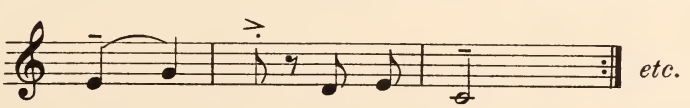

(huh!) Cap-t'n tol' me (huh!) Heard ma ham-mer (huh!) For-ty-nine


mile,— (huh!) For-ty-nine mile.


(huh!) Ev-'ry - bo - dy (huh!) What talks 'bout ham-mer-in' (huh!) Don't know


how,— (huh!) Don't know how.

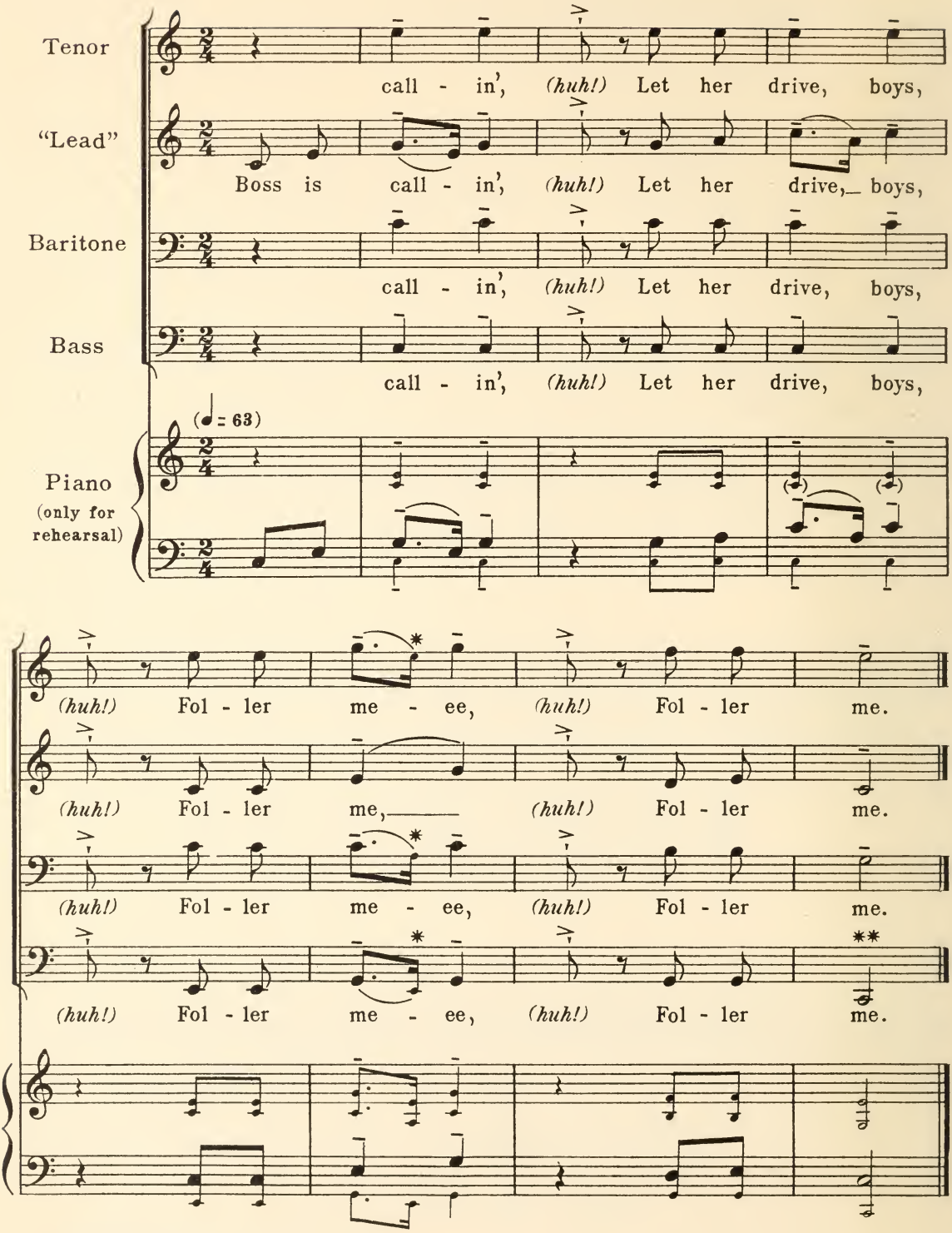

(huh!) Ham-merin' man, you (huh!) Can't beat me, (huh!) I'll go


down,— (huh!) I'll go down.

etc.

Hammerin' Song

Choral Harmonies



* Sixteenth-notes like grace-notes.

** Basses who cannot take the low *C* may go up.

LULLABY

THIS little lullaby is sung with a crooning softness. It is the song with which the devoted slave-nurse lulled to sleep the children of her master. Though the lullaby is indeed "Mammy's" own song, the colored boys at Hampton delight to sing it, and the mellow sweetness of their voices softens the incongruity of a lullaby sung by men. In fact, as they sing, I dream again of my old Negro "Uncle," my grandmother's cook, who used to carry me high on his shoulder. My childhood held no gentler luxury than when tired out with play, I was sung to sleep by the tender, wistful voice of "Uncle Hen'y."

The pentatonic *Variant* of this lullaby was given me by Mrs. Paul Phipps (Nora Langhorne, of Virginia), who heard it from her Negro "Mammy."

The following quotation[1] from Booker T. Washington describes the affectionate relation between the Negro slave and the children of the master.

"The Negro in exile neither pined away nor grew bitter. On the contrary, as soon as he was able to adjust himself to the conditions of his new life, his naturally cheerful and affectionate disposition began to assert itself. Gradually the natural human sympathies of the African began to take root in the soil of the New World and, growing up spontaneously, twine about the life of the white man by whose side the black man now found himself. The slave soon learned to love the children of his master and they loved him in return."

LULLABY

Go ter sleep,
Go ter sleep,
Go ter sleepy, Mammy's baby.
When you wake
You shall have cake;
Go ter sleepy, Mammy's baby.

Go ter sleep,
Go ter sleep,
Go ter sleepy, Mammy's baby.
All dem horsis
In de stable
B'longs ter Mammy's lit'l baby.

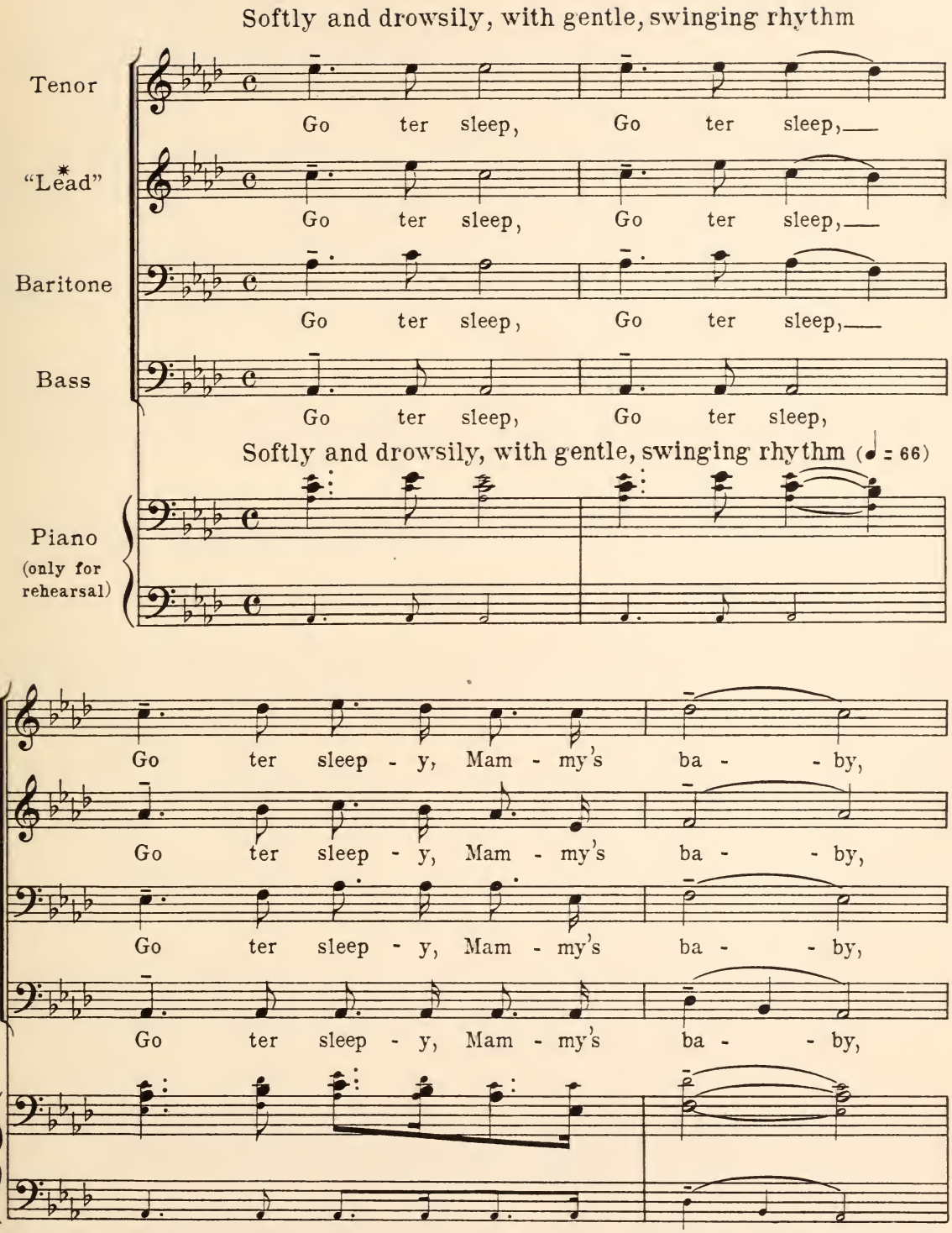
VARIANT

Go ter sleep
Baby-chil',[2]
Go ter sleepy, Mammy's baby.
When you wake
You will have
All de pritty lit'l horsis.

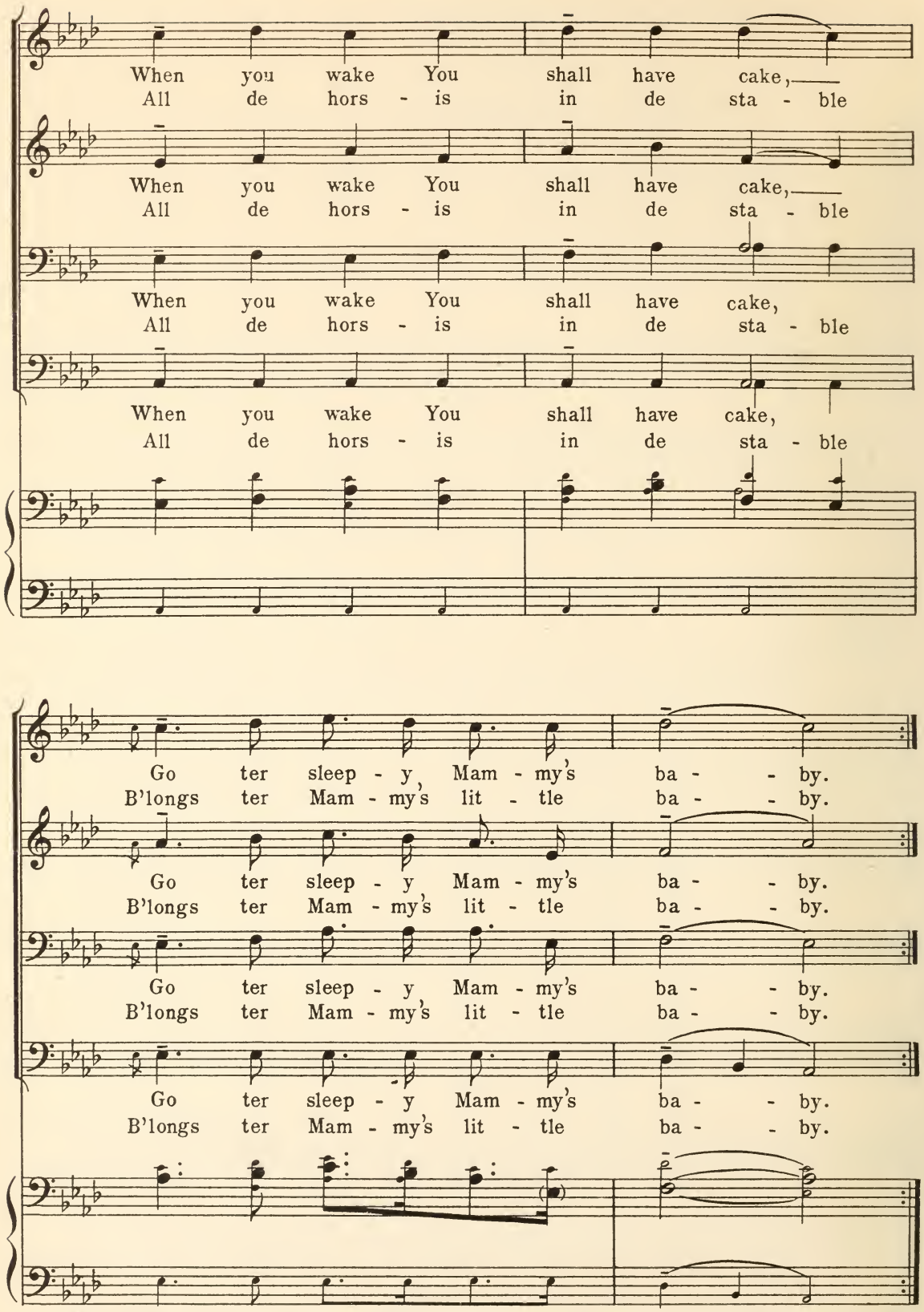
[1]From "The Story of the Negro." Booker T. Washington (Doubleday, Page & Co., N. Y., 1909).
[2]Child.

Black an' blue
An' sorrel, too,
All de pritty lit'l horsis.
Hush-a-bye,
Don't you cry,
Go ter sleep, ma lit'l baby-bye!

III
Lullaby

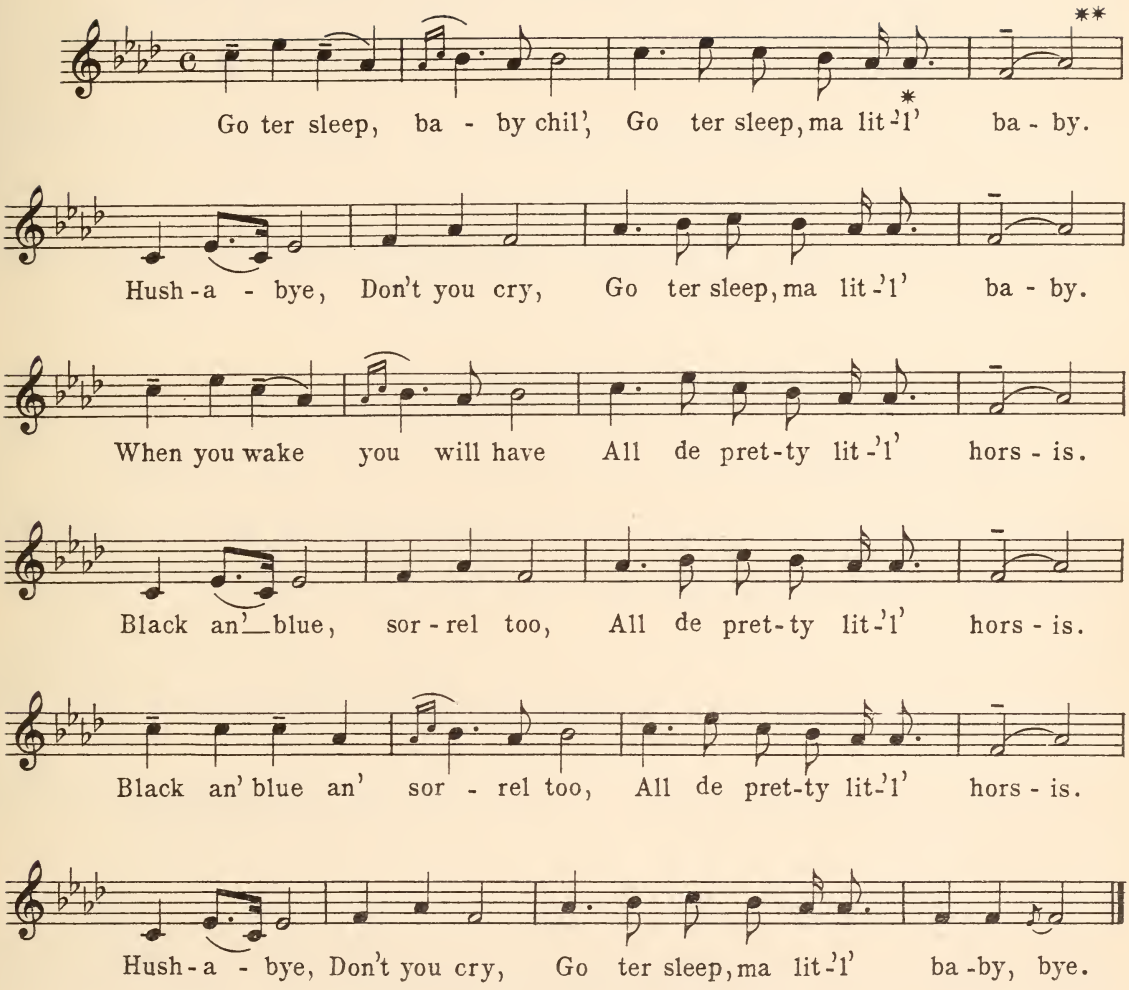


* The voice of the "Lead" or leader carries the melody and is written in the piano part in large type. It should sound above the other voices.



Sung through a third time humming. Or, the song may be sung throughout as a *Solo* by the voice of the "Lead", with the other voices merely humming the harmonies.

Variant



* Pronounced almost like *"li-'l'"*

** Portamento with each of these phrases.

"CHICKA-HANKA"

HERE is an instance of how a simple order to black men working on the railroad is artistically (one may well use the word) improvised upon until a rhythmic little work-song grows up of itself, and music accompanies the puffing of the locomotives and the slow turning of the wheels of the "side-tracked" train. And with what keen musical perception of sound and rhythm is this steaming and puffing and wheeling of a train expressed in the humorous syllables, "chicka-hanka, chicka-hanka, chicka-hanka!"

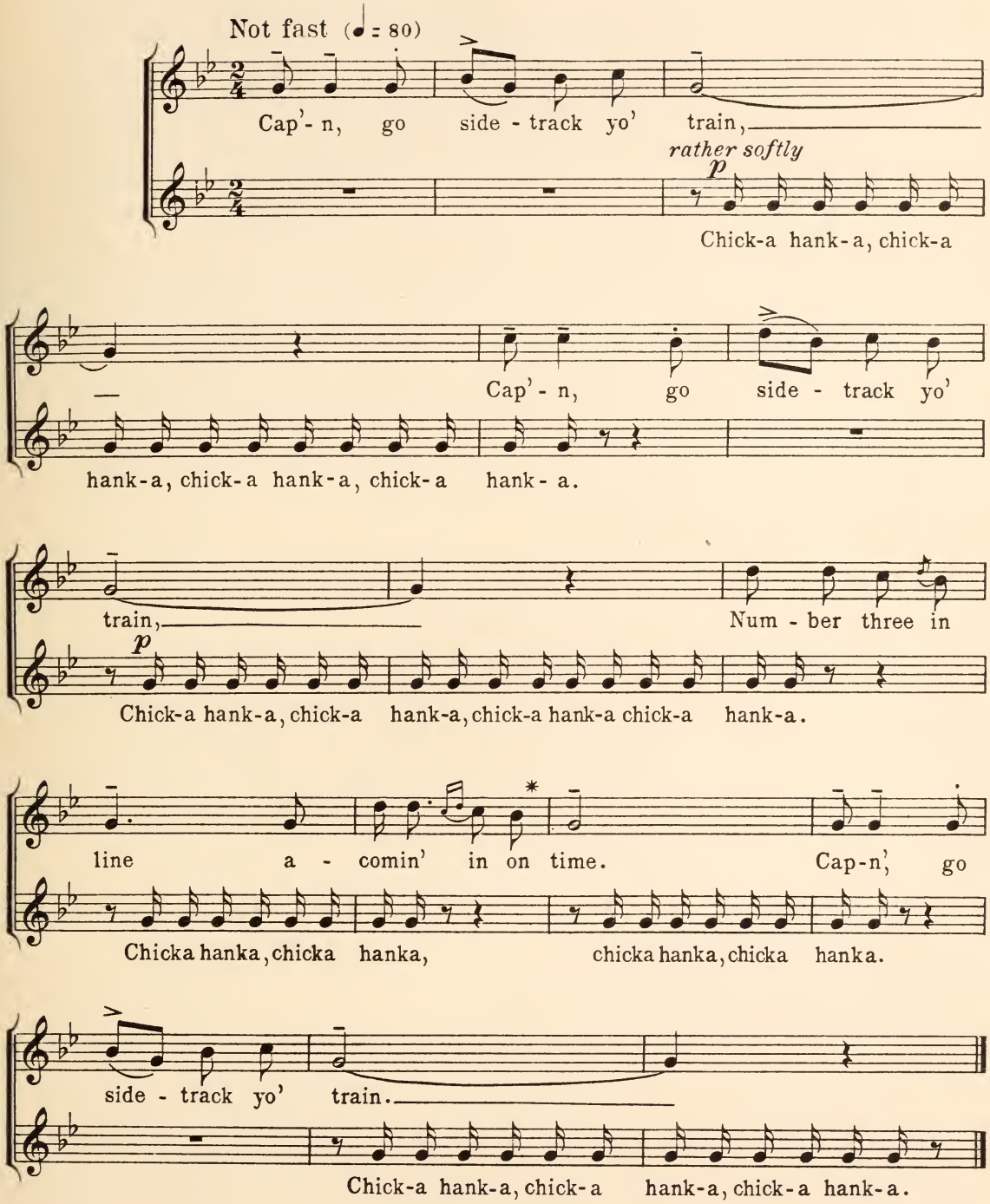
It was Mrs. Paul Phipps (Nora Langhorne) who heard this song in Virginia, and from whose singing I made my first notes. The colored boys at Hampton soon made the song their own and sang it in chorus.

Cap'n, go side-track yo' train!
(*Chicka-hanka, chicka-hanka, chicka-hanka!*)
Cap'n, go side-track yo'train!
(*Chicka-hanka, chicka-hanka, chicka-hanka!*)
Number Three in line,
A-comin' in on[1] time,
Cap'n, go side-track yo' train!
(*Chicka-hanka, chicka-hanka, chicka-hanka!*)

[1]The O is pronounced long, like "ohn" or "ōn."

IV

Chicka-hanka



Note. In male quartet, the tenors should sing the melody, the basses the refrain. Full male chorus should divide in the same way. The refrain should be sung softly (or almost spoken), with just enough tone to carry the consonants. It is merely an imitation of the sound of a slow-moving train – probably a heavy "freight"– being side-tracked to make room for "No. 3".

* "O" is pronounced long in Negro dialect: "ohn."

"HYAH, RATTLER!"

ANOTHER little example of how the song-loving black man sings about everything and anything, is offered in this bit of melody. In running across the field the Negro was bitten on the heel by a rattlesnake which then darted down a "holler lawg" (hollow log). The man calls his dog and it barks furiously—but we are not told whether or not the snake is driven from the "lawg" and killed; we only know that the incident, lingering in the mind of the man, was turned into a little song. It is probably a fact that the Negro *thinks* tunefully, so that in musing over any event it is natural for him to think aloud in song.

The slender little outline of melody in this snatch of tune contains the characteristic flat seventh; the grace-note at the end of the opening phrase marks an effort to express in notation the curious little high break in the voice (not altogether unlike the Swiss "yodel") in which the Negro often indulges and which really defies the recording pencil. When sung by quartet, or chorus, the solo voice sings the narrative, and the chorus comes in on the refrain "Hyah, Rattler, Hyah!"

"HYAH, RATTLER!"

A rattler went daown dat holler lawg,[1]
Hyah![2] Rattler! Hyah!
Ma dawg,[3]—Rattler!
Ma dawg,—Rattler!
Hyah! Rattler! Hyah!

As I was runnin' 'cross de fiel',
A rattlesnake bit me on[4] de heel,
Hyah! Rattler! Hyah!
Ow! Ow![5]—Hyah! Rattler!
Ow! Ow!—Hyah! Rattler!
Hyah! Rattler! Hyah!

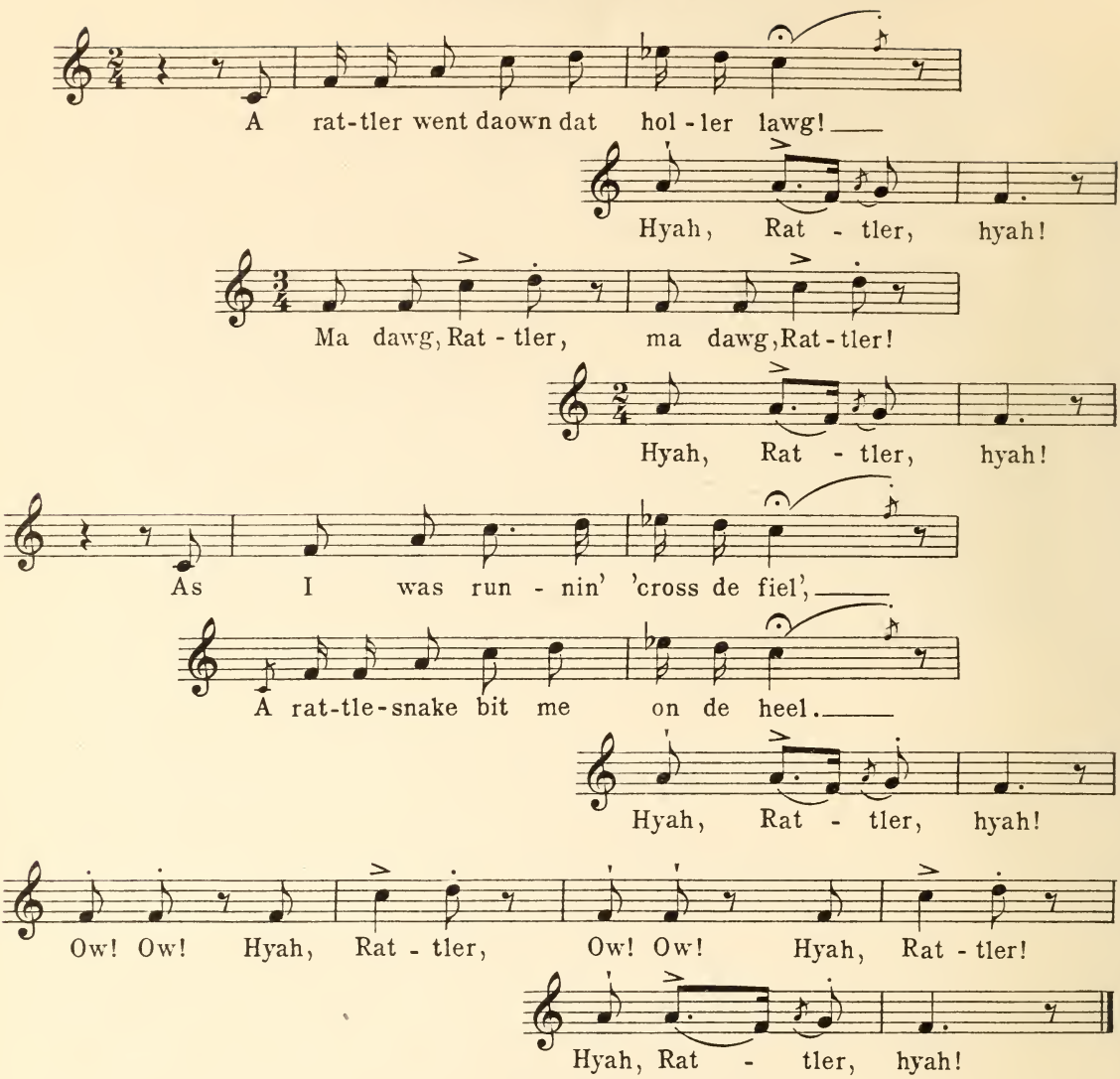
[1]Hollow log.
[2]Here.
[3]Dog.
[4]The O is pronounced long, like "ohn" or "ōn."
[5]To imitate the barking of a dog.

"OLD RAGS, BOTTLES, RAGS!"

ONE morning I was awakened by the clanking of bells and the sound of a voice chanting a little snatch of a refrain. I looked out into a bright cloudless day and saw a battered old rubbish-cart drawn by a sleepy mule, coming slowly down the dusty road. A few crazy bells were strung above the cart and an old colored man sat on the box, lazily lashing the mule with a knotted piece of cord tied to the end of a stick. He was ragged and powdered with dust, and so was his animal, but both seemed utterly content to be ambling thus melodiously through the summer day. And as the old Negro threw his head back and warbled his refrain, with a little yodel-like break in his voice, it seemed to me as though he were singing to the sunshine—singing of the sheer, elemental joy of life, for the prosaic words of his song had melted away into pure euphony. He tuned his voice to chime with his jangling bells, for he sang in pitch with them, and he emphasized the irregular rhythms of his little chant with his ineffectual but decorative bit of cord, which he whirled in the air more as a matter of artistic enjoyment than for any effect that it might have upon the shuffling mule. He was only an old ragman, but his passing woke music on the roads and the memory of his happy voice and cheery bells still rings in my mind.

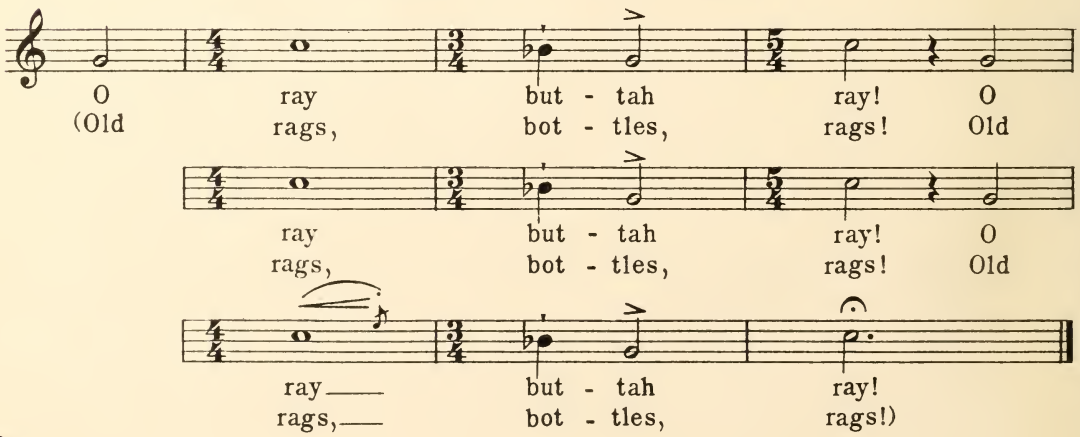
V

"Hyah, Rattler!"



VI

"Old Rags, Bottles, Rags!"



'LIZA-JANE

DANCE-GAME SONG

("Stealin' Partners")

THIS is a dance-game, not unlike the "Oats-peas-beans" of childhood. A number of couples, men and women, dance in a circle, in the centre of which an extra man, who has no partner, dances alone. The performance of this solo dancer is adorned with elaborate, loose-jointed pattering steps, while stamps, turns and flings add emphasis to the throbbing accentuation of the music. The object of the game is for the lone man in the middle of the ring to steal a partner from one of the men in the dancing circle. Then the robbed man must take the centre, and it now becomes his turn to find a mate. So the game goes on, with a constant shifting of partners, while each solo dancer vies with his predecessors in a marvellous abandonment of dance-improvisation.

Any number of verses may be made up to suit the occasion. The song is old, but some of the lines here given are very apparently modern, for we may well believe that it is only in recent years that the "house in Baltimo'" has acquired a "Brussels carpet on de flo' " and a "silver door-plate on de do' ". If the Negroes continue to dance this quaint old game, no doubt the historic house will be brought still further "up-to-date."

This is one of those Negro songs whose rhythmic accompaniment of stamping, shuffling feet and hand-clapping seems an intrinsic part of its musical character. Yet as the dance-step is not fixed, but extemporaneous, I have been able only to indicate a sort of synopsis, as it were, of the different beats, approximating the rhythms of the dancing feet. It would seem, too, as though no record of the song could be complete without some indication of the bursts of laughter and the shouts and calls whose jolly noise colors the simple little tune; for the game of "Stealin' Partners" always forms the groundwork for hilarious fun. The jokes played, the verses improvised, the fantasy and extravaganza of loosened high spirits—all this, which escapes notation and defies description, is at the same time part of the song. The elasticity of the Negro voice finds full play in embellishing with part-singing the shouted chorus. The tenor soars up a tenth above the voice of the "lead" with the same full-throated joy in sound that prompts the bass to dip a tenth below the baritone. Such a volume of tone as pours from those open, laughing mouths, lit by the flash of white teeth!

The onlooker, gazing and listening, is swept by the gale of good-nature that blows across the dance, and is brought to realize how inextinguishable is the cheerfulness and summer-day humor of the black man. Scarcely a race in history—with the exception of the Jews—has suffered greater oppression and wrong; yet in spite of bondage and sorrow, no people in the world seem to have a greater faculty for utter childlike enjoyment than the Negroes at play.

'LIZA-JANE

DANCE-GAME SONG

("Stealin' Partners")

Come ma love an' go wid me,
L'il' 'Liza-Jane,
Come ma love an' go wid me,
L'il' 'Liza-Jane.

O Eliza,[1]
L'il' 'Liza-Jane,
O Eliza,
L'il' 'Liza-Jane.

I got a house in Baltimo',
L'il' 'Liza-Jane,
Street-car runs right by ma do',
L'il' 'Liza-Jane.

O Eliza,
L'il' 'Liza-Jane,
O Eliza,
L'il' 'Liza-Jane.

I got a house in Baltimo',
L'il' 'Liza-Jane,
Brussels carpet on[2] de flo',
L'il' 'Liza-Jane.

O Eliza,
L'il' 'Liza-Jane,
O Eliza,
L'il' 'Liza-Jane.

I got a house in Baltimo',
L'il' 'Liza-Jane,
Silver door-plate on de do',
L'il' 'Liza-Jane.

O Eliza,
L'il' 'Liza-Jane,
O Eliza,
L'il' 'Liza-Jane.

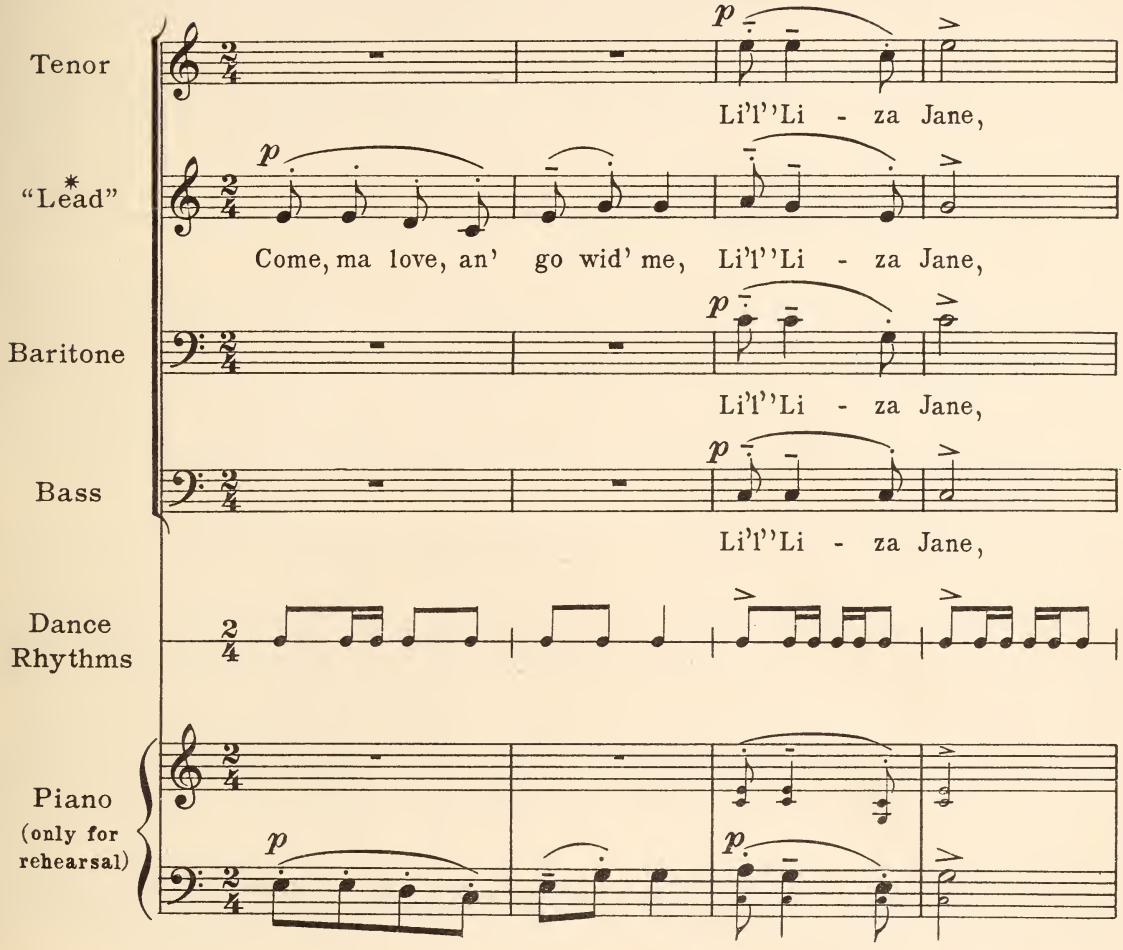
[1]Sometimes "O Miss 'Liza" is sung instead of "O Eliza."
[2]The O is pronounced long—"ohn" or "ōn"—in Negro dialect.

VII

'Liza-Jane

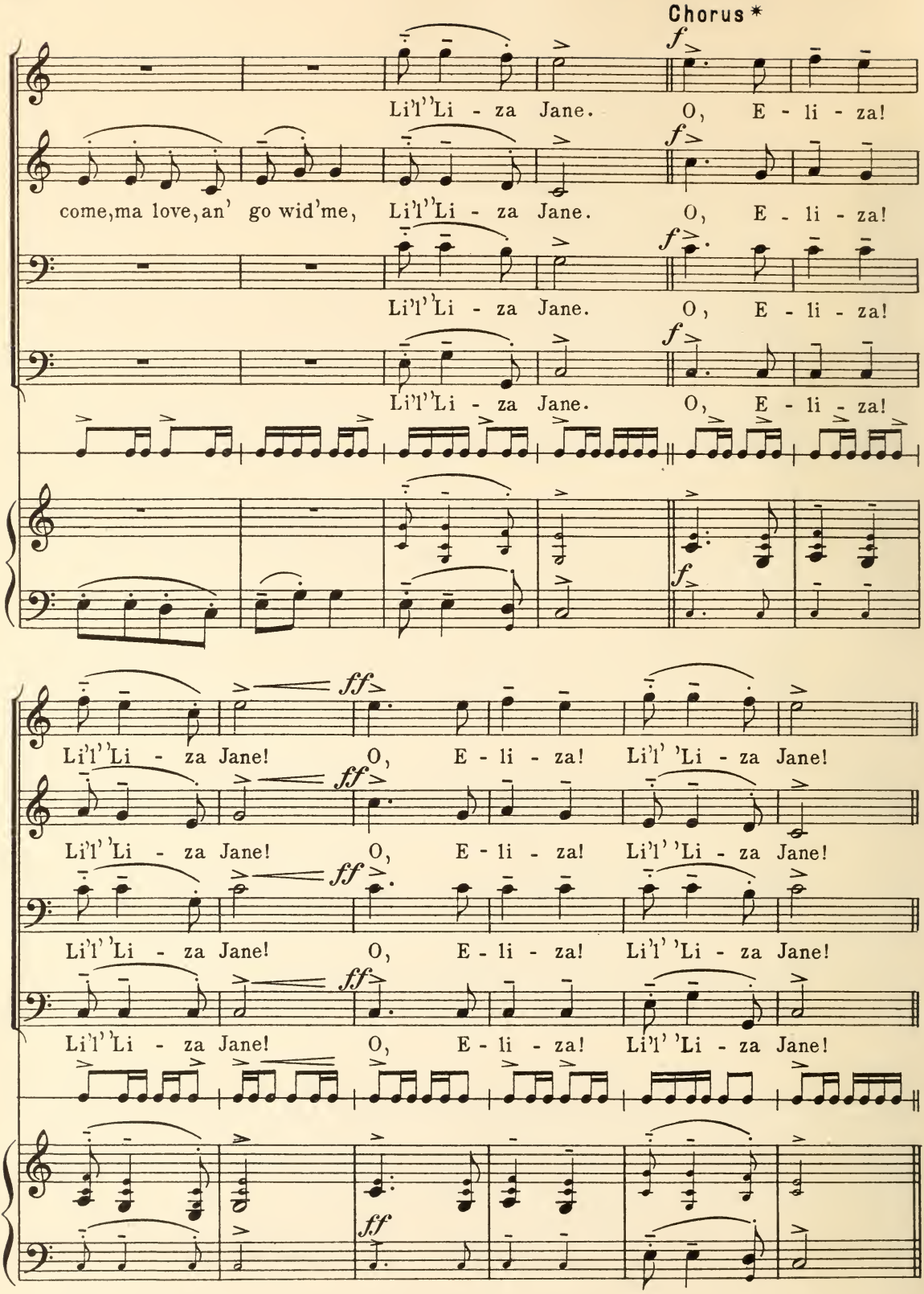
Dance-game Song

("Stealin' Partners")

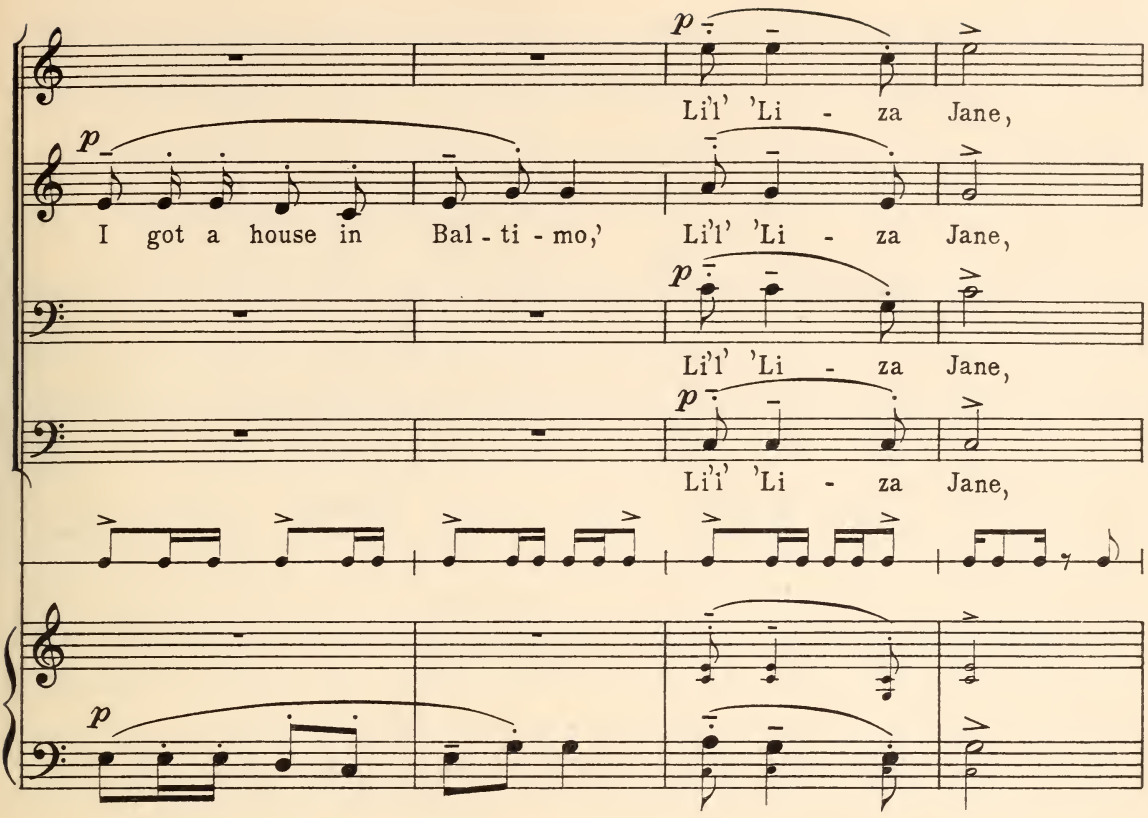


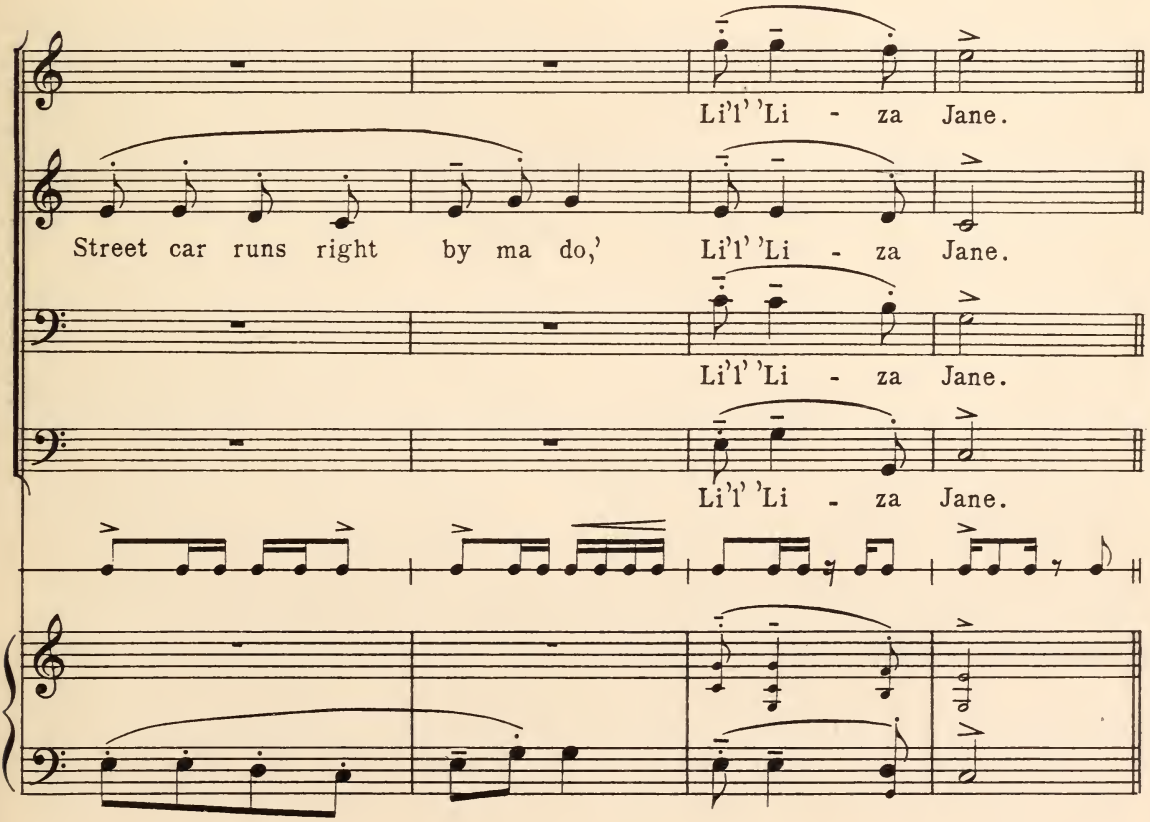
Note. This song may be sung by solo and quartet; or by solo, quartet and chorus, the quartet singing the refrain "Li'l' 'Liza Jane", interspersed between the solo bars, and the full chorus coming in with "O, Eliza!" For concert performance it would be well to have the dance-rhythms indicated by a bone-player, and if he be a Negro, he can improvise his own rhythms with doubtless far more dynamic effect than any recorder could transcribe.

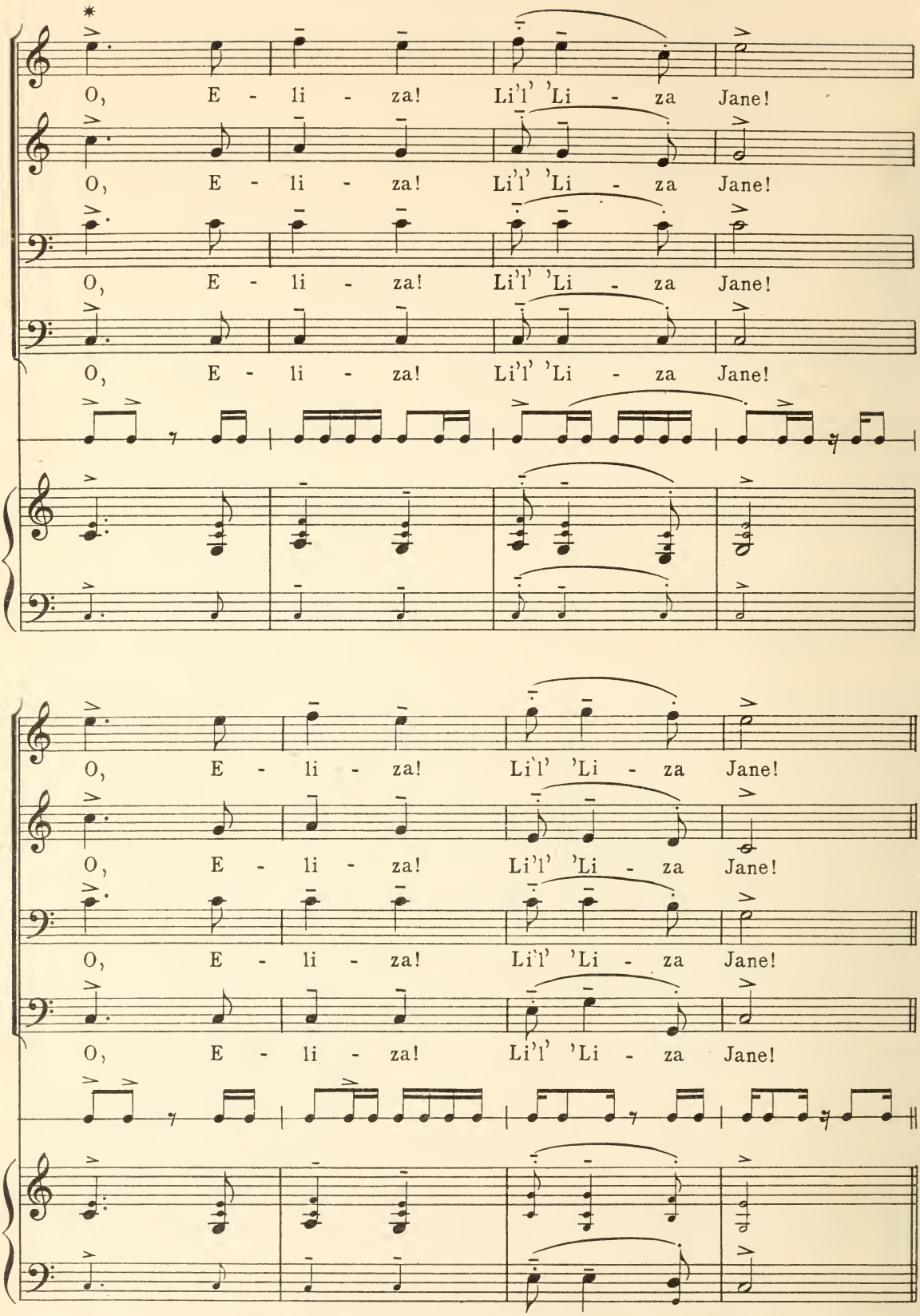
* The voice of the "Lead" carries the melody and is written in the piano-part in large type.



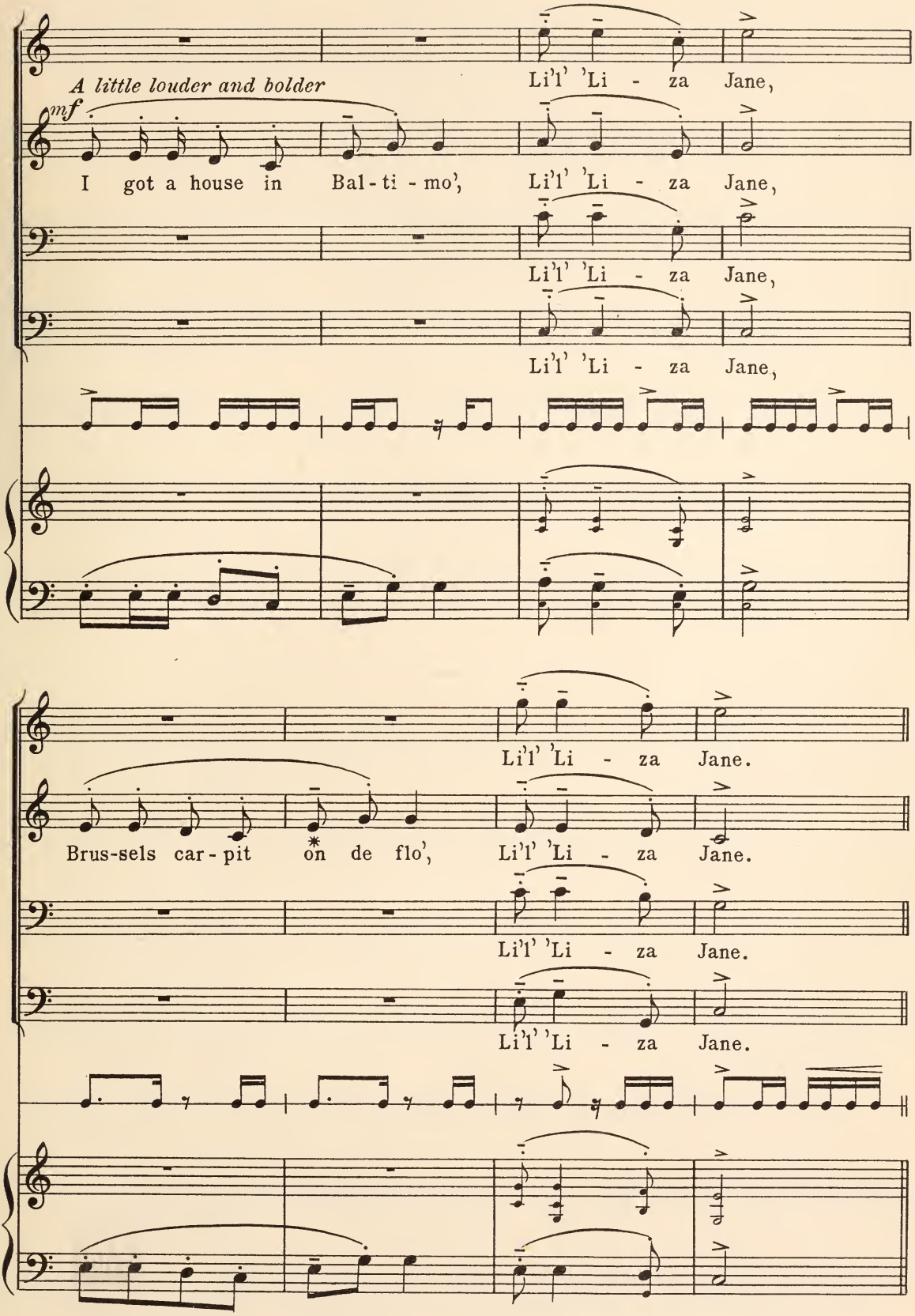
* When a number of people are dancing, all join in the chorus, and sometimes "O Eliza" is shouted at the top of their lungs. As this is a dance-song, dynamics are all broad, and consist chiefly in vociferous rhythmic accentuation. "O, *Miss* Liza" is sometimes sung instead of "O *E*-li-za," and the Tenors may be made interchangeable with the different verses.


p
Li'l' 'Li - za Jane,
I got a house in Bal - ti - mo,' Li'l' 'Li - za Jane,
Li'l' 'Li - za Jane,
Li'l' 'Li - za Jane,

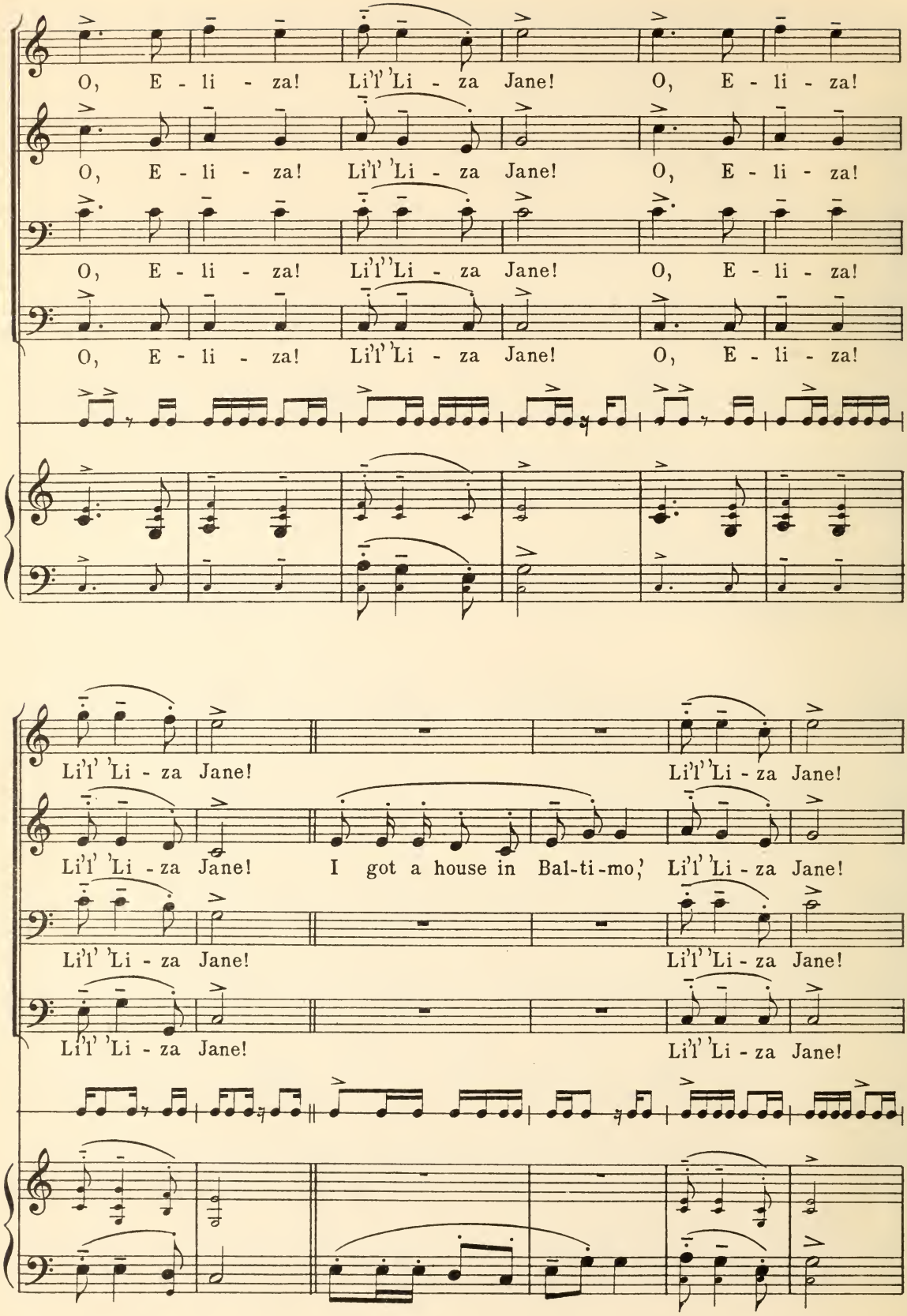

Li'l' 'Li - za Jane.
Street car runs right by ma do,' Li'l' 'Li - za Jane.
Li'l' 'Li - za Jane.
Li'l' 'Li - za Jane.

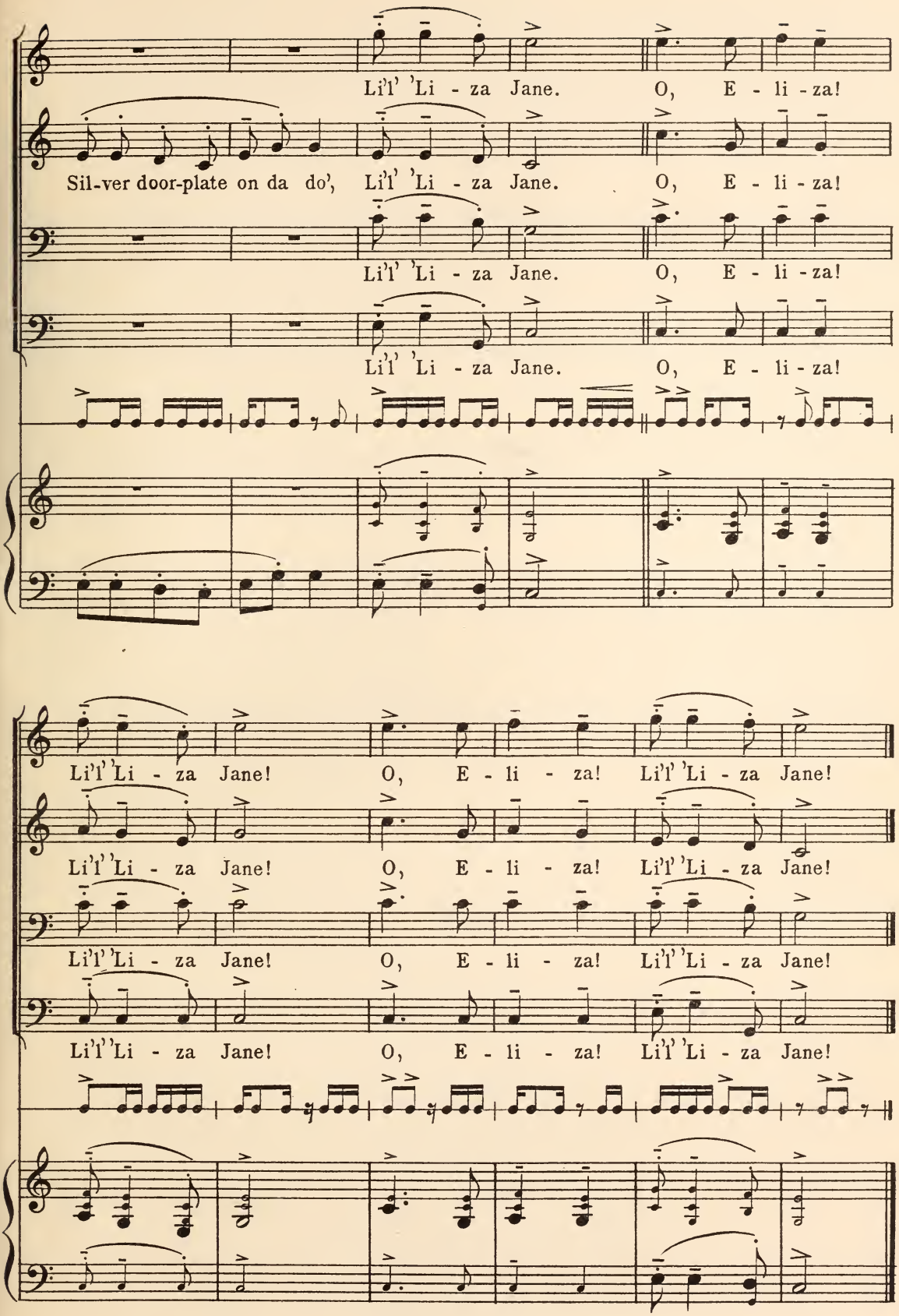


* For concert performance it will perhaps be found effective to sing the chorus through this time *pp*.

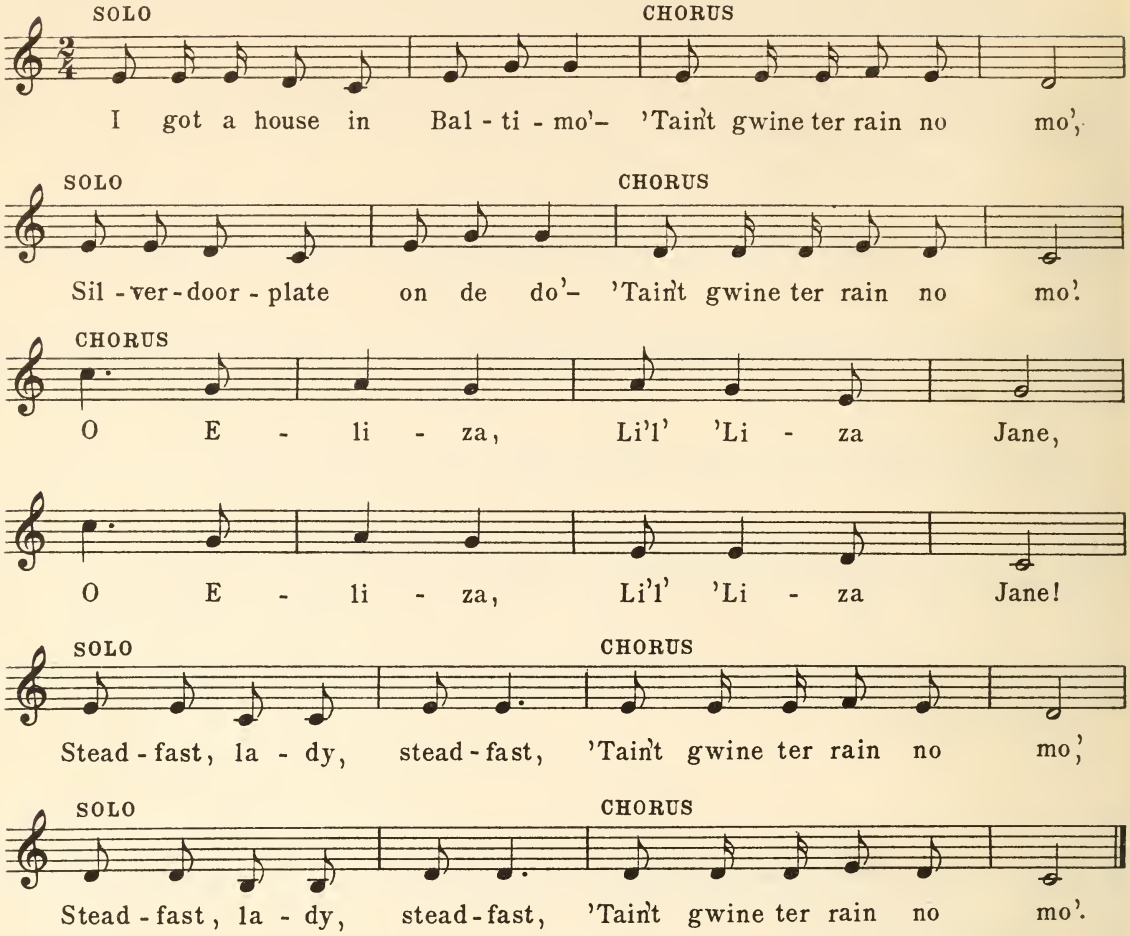


* *O* in Negro dialect pronounced long: "ohn."


O, E - li - za! Li'l' 'Li - za Jane! O, E - li - za!
O, E - li - za! Li'l' 'Li - za Jane! O, E - li - za!
O, E - li - za! Li'l' 'Li - za Jane! O, E - li - za!
O, E - li - za! Li'l' 'Li - za Jane! O, E - li - za!
Li'l' 'Li - za Jane! Li'l' 'Li - za Jane!
Li'l' 'Li - za Jane! I got a house in Bal-ti-mo,' Li'l' 'Li - za Jane!
Li'l' 'Li - za Jane! Li'l' 'Li - za Jane!
Li'l' 'Li - za Jane! Li'l' 'Li - za Jane!


Li'l' 'Li - za Jane. O, E - li - za!
Sil-ver door-plate on da do', Li'l' 'Li - za Jane. O, E - li - za!
Li'l' 'Li - za Jane. O, E - li - za!
Li'l' 'Li - za Jane. O, E - li - za!
Li'l' 'Li - za Jane! O, E - li - za! Li'l' 'Li - za Jane!
Li'l' 'Li - za Jane! O, E - li - za! Li'l' 'Li - za Jane!
Li'l' 'Li - za Jane! O, E - li - za! Li'l' 'Li - za Jane!
Li'l' 'Li - za Jane! O, E - li - za! Li'l' 'Li - za Jane!

At Hampton the following variant is sometimes used:



Chorus: "O, Eliza," *etc.*

Charles N. Wheeler, writing in the Chicago Tribune, says that he heard the following words sung to the tune of "'Liza Jane" by the Negro soldiers in France, though the logical sequence of the lines seems to be reversed.

"I'se got a gal an' you got none –
Li'l' 'Liza Jane,
House an' lot in Baltimo'–
Li'l' 'Liza Jane,
Lots o' chillnn round mah do'–
Li'l' 'Liza Jane.
Th' bumblebee out for sip –
Li'l' 'Liza Jane,
Takes th' sweetnin' from yo' lips –
Li'l' 'Liza Jane.
Come, mah love, an' live with me–
Li'l' 'Liza Jane,
An' I'll take good care of thee–
Li'l' 'Liza Jane."